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Issue 274 The EdZone

Rants & Raves

RICHARD EDWARDS

Thanks to David
Langford for all his SFX columns over the last 21 years. Read the final chapter on p36.

I can't be the only one who thinks The Lego Batman Movie looks way more fun than Batman V Superman...

RANTS

→ ...which, Affleck and Wonder Woman aside, was disappointing.

NICK SETCHFIELD FEAT RAVES

→ Anyone griping about the prospect of a fifth Indiana Jones film shall be lowered into a pit of snakes. At least let Ford and Spielberg have a shot at making a erfect last hurrah for Indy

Farewell to visionary designer Sir Ken Adam, the man who made the Bond films dream big.

IAN BERRIMAN RAVES

Gripped by the downbeat vibe of Rogue One's teaser. Cool thing: notepads from

fictional hotels http://bit.ly/hotelpads.

RANTS

That Walking Dead season finale... far too long, with an intensely annoying final shot Get to the point!

WILL SALMON NEWS RAVES

Glad to hear the Imperial klaxon in that cool Rogue One trailer.

→ I finally read Brad
Dukes's terrific Reflections: An Oral History Of Twin Peaks.

The Walking Dead finale – a fantastic episode in a wobbly season, but that cliffhanger was deeply frustrating



→ The inanity of the BBC having their Film programme on for just a fraction of the year staggers me.

→ Just three people walked out of my screening of High-Rise (apparently it was 15 the night before!). I didn't, but the second hour is so much less interesting than the first one

The Witch: grrrrrrim.

JONATHAN COATES RAVES

→ Great teaser for Rogue One. New Star Wars at Christmas is so

exciting! Kudos to Gareth Edwards for keeping that retro SW vibe with the FX shots too.

Erik Bauersfeld, who voiced Admiral Ackbar, one of my all-time fave SW characters

CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK

> Really impressed by Felicity Jones in the Star Wars: Rogue One trailer. It's now definitely on my radar.

Not on board with another Indy. Think they ruined it with the last one and surely Harrison Ford's too old to crack his whip

ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER

RAVES

We've all got memories from our childhood of classic TV. One that became a firm favourite of mine was The Trap Door. I loved the humour, and adored how it drew much

from horror and dark fantasy. Never will there ever be anything quite like it again. RIP to its creator Terry Brain who sadly passed away recently.

ALEX COX EDITOR, TF RAVES

RedLetterMedia's low-budget time-

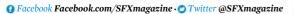
hopping sci-fi comedy Space Cop is understandably wonky, but it's also hilarious and 90% quotable

I'm off to beaver away on "projects" in my basement. It's been a pleasure. Stay classy, SFX

LAUREN O'CALLAGHAN + FILM & EDITOR

Midnight Special is what you've been waiting for – a sci-fi-film-with-asoul is a refreshing change.

Zack Snyder's all-style, nosubstance Batman V Superman was too long, made no sense, and basically ruined me. My longer take: http://bit.ly/BvSdialogue





here was an opinion piece on Telegraph. co.uk a few weeks back headlined "No selfrespecting adult should buy comics or watch superhero movies". Really? I had no idea we were still living in an unenlightened world where comic books and superheroes are looked down on as a lesser form of entertainment.

Just like TV, movies, books and games, the incredibly versatile medium that is the comic book can be targeted at kids, family audiences and even - whisper it - squarely at grown-ups. And there's definitely an appetite for more adult comic book material, both in its original form and translated to the screen. The Walking Dead is the biggest TV show on the planet: *Deadpool* has just become the highestgrossing R-rated movie in history: and now *Preacher* - Garth Ennis's controversial and much-loved Vertigo series – is coming to TV. It's set to be one of the hottest shows of 2016, so we've spoken with the key players (including leading man Dominic Cooper) about what to expect (p44).

And if you like your comic-book adaptations slightly less edgy (but no less epic), we also spent a day on the set of *X-Men*: *Apocalypse* and grabbed every mutant we could find to talk about the latest instalment of the long-running series (p50). Yeah, it's pretty safe to say that comic books have conquered the world. Just for kids? We think not.



Richard Edwards, Editor @RichDEdwards

RICH'S PICTURE BY OLLY CURTIS



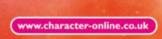
DOCTOR WHO



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SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE!

INTO THE WOODS about the surprises in store for return visitors to Wayward Pines...

M Night Shyamalan talks



Highlights 😃



ON THE RUN

→ We've got the first word on Agents of SHIELD spin-off Marvel's Most Wanted.



SYLVIA ANDERSON

→ We bid farewell to the Thunderbirds co-creator - and Lady Penelope.



CALLING DR JONES

→ Indy 5 is coming, but what treasure will the man in the fedora be hunting?



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SCI - FACT! Next up for Shyamalan is Split - a supernatural thriller starring James McAvoy. It's due out in 2017.

66 It's about the fate of humanity and whether mankind will survive at all... 99

books that we didn't use in the first season and they're finding their way in."

After Wayward Pines' first year, Shyamalan invited Crouch to his home in Philadelphia and discussed the idea of ending the show rather than forcing a second season into production.

"We sat down and said, 'Let's not make any more of this unless we know what our story is and we want to tell that story.' I didn't want it to be an open-ended story, and neither did Blake. We wanted to know where we were aiming. I think you can tell that in TV, when you can feel the storytellers vamping. But we're aiming towards a target. We said, 'This feels like two more seasons. And that's it.' All the writers from the writers' room came here and we all talked and we said, 'This is where we're gonna get to by the end of the second season. And then we're gonna close the show this way.' So if we're lucky enough to have a third season, the end point will come at the end of the third season."

In furthering their tale, the creators introduce a new protagonist into the show, played by Jason Patric, who succeeds previous star Matt Dillon.

"His name is Theo Yedlin," says Shyamalan's showrunner Donald De Line, who's halfway through shooting this season's second episode. "He's a doctor, so as we meet him in the first episode he's been woken up from suspension. He's been woken up because the town is in a bit of a crisis, and he needs to operate to save someone's life. It turns out that he's a very smart man of science, of medicine, and he comes to learn about Wayward Pines.

"With Matt Dillon's character from the first season," De Line continues, "we had sort of a law-enforcement perspective on it. There was a new sheriff in town. But in some ways you can imagine that in a small town where this is all that's left of humanity, an experienced doctor would be just as valuable an asset, and would have an amount of power that he may not even realise when he wakes up. He's a force to be reckoned with."

Joining Patric's character is Megan Fisher, the principal of Wayward Pines Academy and the wife of the town's mayor. Played by Hope Davis, Fisher was a recurring character in the show's first year and is now a Wayward Pines regular.



"Audiences will have some questions about how she made it out of the first season," says De Line, "which we will address. She's a devoted follower of [Wayward Pines' founding scientist] Pilcher [played by Toby Jones] and someone who would remain a key advisor, regardless of who's in charge. But then of course what's interesting about that is these people are obviously being placed under a great deal of peril, and how does being placed under peril affect not just the advisors but the leaders themselves? How do they react? You really want to put the characters and the world under as much stress as possible. This isn't a lighthearted situation. It's about the fate of humanity and whether mankind will survive at all... Everyone who returns is there for a reason.'

In addition to Davis, fans are expecting return visits from fellow first season veterans Jones, Carla Gugino, Shannyn Sossamon, Melissa Leo and Tim Griffin, while Patric is also being joined by fellow newcomers Djimon Hounsou and Nimrat Kaur (as Yedlin's wife Rebecca).

"It's going to be tonally similar," says Crouch, who completed his book trilogy when Wayward Pines was in production. "Obviously in the first season we have this shift after episode five, from a psychological thriller into a science fiction idea. One of the things we have going into the second season is that now everyone knows what the secret is. They know that they're surrounded by the aberrations, which is what we've become. So in a lot of ways it allows our storytelling to be much more muscular and look right into the ramifications of being the last town on Earth." •

Wayward Pines season two begins on Fox on 25 May in the US. It will also air on Fox in the UK.









It's hard to shake the feeling that Toby Jones is actually watching them through a small window.

THE PLACE **BEYOND THE PINES**

last town standing...

LIKE A SURGEON

→ "We came up with this idea that our protagonist is a surgeon," says author Blake Crouch of Jason Patric's hero, "swept out of his world, out of our world, as all the [people] of Wayward Pines are. What's interesting about having him be a surgeon in Wayward Pines is that when we encounter this town again at the beginning of season two, it's missing a doctor in a very real way. Because things are not working, things are going wrong. He comes and he gets very much involved in the future of where Wayward Pines is heading."



BIG SCREEN, LITTLE SCREEN

→ "None of us had done a TV show before," says M Night Shyamalan. "Almost all of us - from Blake to Matt [Dillon] to Melissa [Leo] to everybody... We bring a lot of film value systems to the table, and we really give a lot of control to the directors as well. to bring cinema to the table and customise that approach. The hope is that you'll be switching channels and suddenly the frames you'll be seeing will be slightly different. It's coming from a slightly different aesthetic that will hopefully remind you of cinematic experiences that you've had."

PLAYING THE GAME

→ "Yes, there was a sci-fi genre element to it," says Donald De Line of Wayward Pines' first season. "But my opinion is that all the best science fiction really works when it comes from a place of character. Where the world is grounded in the science fiction of it all. The rules of the world have been firmly established, and so my job was to build on that. I have these pieces I can move around the board in an interesting way, but it's all still inside a world with a fence."

MAD SCIENCE

→ "One of the things that attracted me to the show was it was in a lot of genres at different times," says De Line, who joins Wayward Pines in its second season. "I consider this the next chapter in the story. Where it continues from the first chapter but there are new elements. So it's kind of a hybrid. It will appeal to people who are interested in the romance, the action and the ethical dilemmas. There are people who thought Pilcher was a madman, and there are people who thought Pilcher did exactly what he needed to do. That's something we want to sustain for the second season."







Loeb says that capitalising on what sets Morse and Hunter apart from their former comrades is what showrunners Jeff Bell and Paul Zbyszewski focused on while writing their pilot script. "Agents Of SHIELD, at its core, is a story about family. It's a diverse family and a complicated family... They depend on each other and care very much about each other."

With Most Wanted, which finds our ex-agents alone and on the run, that sense of family is out of the window. "Here are these two people who have a very real problem. Who can they trust? Can they trust each other? That kind of back and forth will be an awful lot of fun, and lets us get at some characters we've never seen before, who are well-known, that very much live in that merc world."

Actors Delroy Lindo, Oded Fehr and Fernanda Andrade have also been cast in the pilot. Loeb remains tight-lipped on who they are playing, but it is known that Fehr will play the villain - said to be a familiar Marvel character - and that Lindo is taking the role of rogue adventurer Dominic Fortune.

"One of the things that is delightful is that the Marvel Universe gives us different places to go. Guardians Of The Galaxy is different to Captain America. Doctor Strange will open new doors. The characters who live in Hell's Kitchen are very different from the characters that are on SHIELD. We wanted to go to a new place in this series. Characters like Dominic Fortune live in the grey and can turn on a dime. And that's a very exciting way for us to tell stories." •

Marvel's Most Wanted will be airing in the US later this year.



ROUND UP

→ Doctor Who spin-off Class has cast Greg Austin, Elsaved. Sophie Hopkins and Vivian Oparah as its four stars. plus Katherine Kelly as a teacher at Coal Hill school. → A US remake of Misfits is on the way... Wonder if they'll keep the bit about "tripling"? → This Is England's Jack Thorne to write the His Dark television show. → Lucifer has been renewed for season two. → A TV adaption of Susan Cooper's fantasy classic The Dark Is Rising is on the way to Sky 1. → Jessica Henwick has joined the fledging cast of Marvel's Iron Fist.

→ Black Mirror will not be returning to Channel 4 instead the new run of Charlie Brooker's anthology series will be exclusive to Netflix. → Outcast already renewed for a second season. → Doctor Who's Michelle Gomez has been nominated for a Bafta for her role as Missy.



KEVIN MACDONALD

THE DIRECTOR OF BLACK SEA AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF 11.22.63'S GENRE FAVES...

Favourite SF/fantasy TV show

→ I'm not into any of the big sci-fi shows, like Star Trek or Doctor Who. I liked Rattlestar Galactica, the reboot, the most To me that's the gold standard of intelligent science fiction on television.

Favourite SF/fantasy book

→ I was always very into fantasy. I'd say that my dream books to turn into films - I don't know why it never happened - are the Earthsea trilogy, which I loved as a kid. I still remember the physicality of the world and the specificity of the fantasy elements. Just the world she [Ursula Le Guin] creates. It feels like she's really created a world you can touch and the psychology seems familiar and understandable.

Favourite SF/fantasy film

→ A film that I loved is Silent Running. I haven't seen it for a long time, but there's something for me that's so beautiful about that combination of plant life, biology and space. I'm also a Starship Troopers fan. I rewatched that a couple of years ago. It is sort of genius, actually. The tone that Verhoeven manages to capture is just fantastic and ironic. You're never quite sure when your leg is being pulled and when it's not.

Favourite SF/fantasy character

→ I'm going to be really unimaginative and say the wizard from the Earthsea books. Ged. Unlike most books which you go back to, which you read as a teenager and go back to and just seem really thin and disappointing, that really stood up for me. I was really impressed by it. It was almost better as an adult.

11.22.63 is currently airing on Fox UK.



66 DON'T QUOTE ME 99

"I WAS ACCUSED OF GIVING THE PLOT AWAY, BUT I JUST THINK GET A F**KING LIFE. IT'S ONLY TITS AND DRAGONS.

Ian McShane has some strong words for Game Of Thrones fans accusing him of giving away spoilers.





Sylvia Anderson once voiced Lady Penelope for a cameo appearance on Absolutely Fabulous.



film business until she was 30. An innocuous classified ad led her to a new job and to future husband Gerry, while a chance encounter with novelist Roberta Leigh resulted in the puppet series Twizzle.

Gerry, keen to escape this low-grade form of filmmaking, pushed to improve the puppet technology, while Sylvia wanted them to develop their own stories. They moved into science fiction with Supercar and began their golden-association with Lew Grade, who saw enormous potential in these puppet epics.

Sylvia oversaw every aspect of what they dubbed "Character Visualisation" - which included sculpting, voices and clothing. As a glamorous '60s-gal, Sylvia was key to making the shows reflect the colourful era in which they were made.

For their first feature film Thunderbirds Are Go, Sylvia found herself thrust into the producer's chair - one of the few women undertaking such a job at that time. This was a role she relished and her no-nonsense attitude made her well suited to it.

The Andersons' success led them to their dream of producing shows with real actors. UFO and Space: 1999 resulted. However, the pressures of huge success caused the collapse of their marriage. The divorce was acrimonious and Sylvia found her contribution to the shows largely airbrushed out of history by her ex-husband.

After a difficult time spent trying to re-establish herself, Sylvia became the British Programming Representative for HBO. She remained proud of her Supermarionation shows and continued to support new ventures to do with her best-known creations. She played Lady Penelope one final time for the documentary Filmed In Supermarionation (2014), and Aunt Sylvia in the CGI revival Thunderbirds Are Go (2015). She was also part of Thunderbirds 1965 - three new episodes of the series produced using old techniques and voice recordings from the '60s. "When you make something like Thunderbirds it becomes bigger than any one person," she said. "It's just marvellous to see it continuing."



SCI-FACT!

Mappalujo began life as a web fiction project. The original site (from 2002) is still viewable at mappalujo.co.uk.





Brennan Mulwray in Mutant X



Before his role as Detective Carlos Fonnegra in Continuum, Victor Webster found early success as Brennan Mulwray in Mutant X. He also played Coop in Charmed.

What's the strangest request you've had from a fan?

→ To donate my sperm so that they could have my child!

What would Brennan be doing now?

→ The way the series was going he might have tried to do his own thing and become independent from the group. Maybe he settled down, maybe he had a family. Or he might be drunk in an alleyway or in jail somewhere!

Is there anything you think was unfinished about his story?

→ It would've been nice to have seen his evolution... to explore the independence of his character away from the team would've been interesting.

Did you get any set souvenirs?

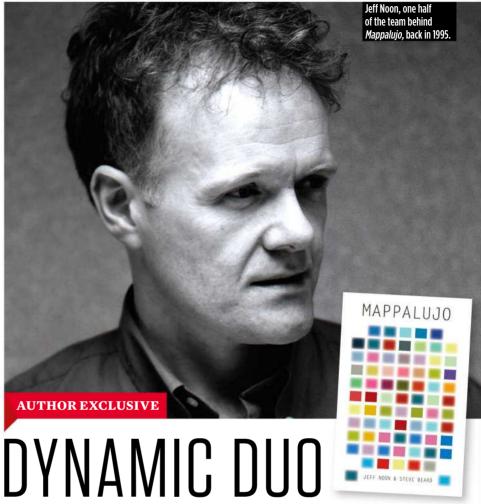
→ I have the ring that we all wore with the silver X on it. I think I have one of Brennan's leather jackets as well. The ring I took but the jacket I asked for!

Is there anything from the show you wish was real?

→ I'd love to be a crime-fighter in real life. I'd love to be assigned to helping people – with or without powers.

What would it say on his gravestone?

→ Kick ass on Earth now and kick ass wherever it is you go from here!



Jeff Noon and Steve Beard on *Mappalujo*'s journey from word game to bookshelf

It was originally devised as a collaborative storytelling method. Now Jeff Noon and Steve Beard have turned their work *Mappalujo* into a novel. Using the technique, the two authors alternated chapters of the book, which each take some kind of lead from the work of a particular cultural icon ranging from Kraftwerk to the Spice Girls.

"It's been a true meeting of minds in two stages," Noon tells Red Alert. "First, the initial experimental phase where we passed ideas back and forth between us, and then the more conventional crafting stage. We were always surprised at the events, characters and images that arrived, as the process seemed to release hidden ideas that we would never have come up with had we been working separately."

Set in the fictional city of Lujo, it harks back to the heady dreamscapes of Noon's 1993 debut *Vurt*, as the story centres around the battle between global entertainment company Zeno and opposition group the Renegade Angels. "The book is really about masks, and how we make them, choose them, wear them, discard them, force them on other people, and so on," explains Noon. "It starts with Joe Prentice, a mask salesman who goes a bit crazy one day, and ends up creating a rebel text, which is then picked up by other characters in later chapters."

As its title suggests, *Mappalujo* also indicates an interest in cartography. "Classic fantasy novels tend to come with maps of the strange worlds they are set in," says Beard. "We've done a classic bit of world-building with *Mappalujo*, but it's as much a map as it is a world. In fact, it's a map of itself, in time-honoured Borgesian fashion."

Mappalujo by Jeff Noon and Steve Beard is available from Spectral Press on 15 May.

S C - F A C T Valérian And Laureline ran from 1967 to 2010's final collection, L'Ouvre Temps (The Time Opener).



http://bit.ly/sfx2001.



SCI-FACT

The game's title crawls ape the font, aspect ratio and vanishing point of the lettering in the films.



→ Marvel Studios is developing a TV series based on Cloak And Dagger. the '80s superhero duo created by Bill Mantlo and Ed Hannigan. Walking Dead's season finale pulled in a massive 18.4 million viewers in the US. → Hugh Howev's Beacon 23 is being adapted for TV with The Sarah Connor Chronicles's Josh Friedman set to write the series. → Channel 4's **Humans** has been nominated for a Best Drama Bafta → Seth Rogen is developing a show based on Garth Ennis's The Boys. → Seven **Psychopaths** actress Gabourey Sidibe has joined the cast of **American Horror** Story season six. → Mr Robot showrunner Sam Esmail will direct every episode of its second season. → Kim Stanley Robinson's SF classic Red Mars is being adapted for Spike TV. → Peter Capaldi has revealed that he knows who the

new Doctor Who

companion is...



There's an extra reason for fans of a certain galaxy far, far away to be excited about the upcoming *Lego Star Wars: The Force Awakens* game. As well as the humour and brickified versions of key movie moments that have become a hallmark of the 11-year-old videogame series, there'll also be Lucasfilm-approved plot additions that'll help explain *Episode VII* backstories.

"We've got the opportunity to play through stories that you may not be familiar with," associate producer Tim Wileman tells Red Alert. "There's Han and Chewie with the Rathtars and how they captured those, and you'll be able to discover how Lor San Tekka [the old man who gave Poe Dameron the intel about Luke's whereabouts] got to Jakku, and the events leading up to that. This new content that we're creating will be used as a point of reference [for *Star Wars* canon] moving forward, so it's fantastically exciting."

The game features 18 levels and over 200 customisable characters. Wileman also says that "all of the major talent have come back into the studio for us to record new lines

and dialogue, and that gave us a fantastic opportunity to embellish some of the scenes from the film."

In terms of gameplay, the developers at franchise stalwarts TT Games say they're not just resting on their laurels with same-old, same-old. New functions include "Blaster Battles" (which allow you to take cover from laser fire behind convenient objects), "Multi-Builds" (you'll now have a choice of ways to use a pile of Lego bricks to construct to solve a puzzle), and the one that's got us most excited – the chance to fly the Millennium Falcon.

"It wouldn't be an authentic Force Awakens experience without the Falcon," says Wileman. "But there are other areas in the game as well, like Maz Kanata's castle on Takodana, where you'll get the opportunity to play as Poe Dameron in his X-wing and dogfight with TIE fighters.

"The team are massive *Star Wars* geeks," he continues, "they're obsessed, so the game

"they're obsessed, so the game is cram-packed full with little Star Wars references. But it's going to be a joy to play through for any Star Wars or Lego game fan."

Lego Star Wars: The Force Awakens is released on PS4, Xbox One, PC and other platforms on 28 June.



James Cameron on the secrets of his much-delayed, definitely-still-relevant, *Avatar 2*. There's nothing like a confirmed release date at present.



Andy Weir (The Martian) wrote a fan-fiction prequel based in the Ready Player One universe.

READY PLAYER ONE

Steven Spielberg's return to '80s geek nirvana

A NFW HOPE

In a cinematic landscape dominated by the familiar likes of Star Wars and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, a big-budget blockbuster that isn't based on an existing series is a rare thing indeed. While Ready Player One is the newbie that bucks the trend, however, it will feel comfortingly familiar - this movie is set to bring together bits and pieces from as many disparate franchises as The Lego Movie did back in 2014.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNEST

Adapted from Ernest Cline's bestselling debut novel, Ready Player One is set in an over-populated future where fossil fuels have all but run out, and the human race escapes the misery of its everyday existence by retreating into a sophisticated virtual reality system known as the OASIS. When OASIS inventor James Halliday dies, the geeky, Steve Jobs-ish figure leaves behind a complex Easter Egg hunt - the first person to reach the end will win control of Halliday's vast business empire.

NOSTALGIA FEST

• Good news for members of generations X and Y! Halliday was totally obsessed with '80s pop culture, so all the puzzles he sets are based around the movies, TV, music, books, comics and games he grew up with. In Cline's novel, many devote their entire lives to the search for Halliday's Easter Egg. Known as "gunters" (short for Egg hunters), they revise everything they can about '80s pop culture - from arcade games to song lyrics to Monty Python movie dialogue - to help them in their quest.

STAR PLAYER

O Christopher Nolan was briefly linked with the movie, but seeing as Steven Spielberg probably had his fingerprints over more '80s classics than anyone else, it's difficult to imagine a better fit for the Ready Player One directing gig. "It's classic Spielberg, right in the centre of the sweet spot of really his classic work," explains producer Donald De Line. "There could be no one better to bring this to the screen."

NIGHT OF THE GUNTER

The story focuses on teen orphan gunter Wade (avatar name Parzival), who'll be played by X-Men: Apocalypse's new Cyclops Tye Sheridan. Rival gunter Samantha Cook/ Art3mis will be played by Me And Earl And The Dying Girl's Olivia Cooke, while Simon Pegg has reportedly signed on to play Halliday's old business partner Ogden Morrow. Chief villain duties go to Ben Mendelsohn (soon to be a baddie in Star Wars: Rogue One) as the egg-hunting face of a massive corporation that wants control of the OASIS for itself.

ALL ABOUT STEVE?

• While DeLine says that "We've had pretty darn good luck with getting all the various games and characters and brands to sign on [to appear in the movie]," we won't be

> seeing any of the numerous nods to Spielberg's filmography that appear in the novel. "The movie won't have any of my films in it," says the director. "I'm just going to

> > leave myself out of it. I can't do that. Too self-referential."

WHEN DOES IT BOOT UP?

Having moved from its original December 2017 slot to avoid Star Wars: Episode VIII. Ready Player One is now pencilled in for 30 March 2018. @



FACTS

→ Erik Bauersfeld, the voice of Admiral Ackbar as well as many more roles, has passed away at the age of 93. → Disney plans Rose Red - the story of Snow White's sister. The Venom solo film is back on - albeit with the connection removed! → An animated Final Fantasy movie, Kingsglaive: Final Fantasy XV. is on the way. Kingsmar sequel has a title. Eggsy will be returning in Kingsman: The Golden Circle → Screen Gems is developing The Caretaker – an SF thriller about a female android who chooses to protect a vulnerable girl. → DC launches Young Animal, a mature readers imprint from DC that will feature new runs of Doom Patrol and Shade. → Sharpen your octarine pencils a Terry Pratchett colouring book



"AT THE END OF THIS YEAR WE'RE MAKING THE DEFENDERS AND, OF COURSE, DAREDEVIL IS VERY MUCH A PART OF THAT FOURSOME.

Charlie Cox confirms the filming of Netflix's Defenders but there's no word, as yet, on Daredevil season three...



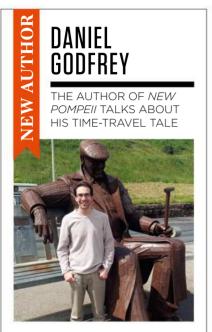
in August.

Paul Kidby is out



SCI-FACT

It was Joss Whedon who first suggested that Civil War should lead into The Death Of Captain America.



What is New Pompeii about?

→ Energy giant Novus Particles develops the technology to transport objects and people from the deep past to the present. Its biggest secret is New Pompeii, a replica of the city hidden in central Asia. Novus claims it's a historical research facility, but new employee Nick Houghton starts to realise it may have other motives.

What sparked off your ideas?

> I was reading a lot about ancient Rome at the same time as I was dusting off an old short story about time travel. The two snapped together.

Why did you choose Pompeii?

→ There's a mystery behind Pompeii: where are all the people? Sure, the plaster casts are famous, but there are relatively few of them. Some academics say everyone fled... and yet ovens in the town were found to be full of carbonised loaves. The volcano, the plaster casts of people and the fact we

can today take a walk around the town add up to something that's always fascinated me.

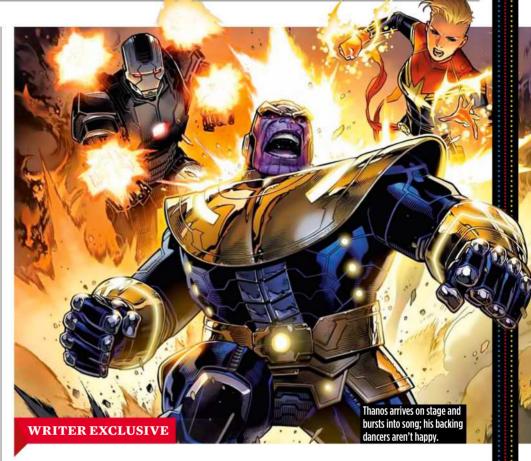
Did you do a lot of historical research?

→ The tricky thing with Rome is that in many ways it seems very familiar - and in other ways it's very alien. I hope New Pompeii continues the story of these people in the right way.

What are you working on next?

→ The sequel is underway, and I have a few other ideas on the back-burner.

New Pompeii is published by Titan Books on 21 June.



CHOOSING SIDES

Marvel's mightiest heroes are at each other's throats again in Civil War II

With Captain America: Civil War arriving in cinemas this month, it seems like an obvious move for Marvel to release a sequel to Mark Millar and Steve McNiven's 2006 original series. However, according to Civil War II scribe Brian Michael Bendis - who's teaming up with artist David Marquez - the seven-part series is more of a natural progression than a cynical cash-in.

"It wasn't a case of, 'Oh, there's a movie coming out so we should do Civil War II!"" Bendis tells Red Alert. "It was more like, 'We've got this story, that clearly sounds like it's Civil War II, so we might as well call it that."

Beginning with the emergence of a new Inhuman who can foresee the future, the comic's central premise has been compared to Minority Report. "It's not about predicting crimes so much as predicting future events, and what level of accuracy does this power have,"

argues Bendis. "It's like, 'If you're 80% sure that this guy is going to kill that guy, do you arrest him beforehand or even kill him?' What about 70% or 20%? Where do you draw the line?"

While Iron Man and Captain Marvel head up the rival factions, Captain America again plays a prominent role, and intriguingly there are now two Sentinels of Liberty in Sam Wilson and Steve Rogers, who recently clashed over their principles. "Steve and Tony already went to the mat that one time, so they might not be so horny to do it all over again," reasons Bendis. "There isn't an assembled team in the Marvel Universe that completely agrees about this, so the one thing that is similar to the original Civil War is that there isn't a family or team that isn't in danger of breaking up over this." •

Civil War #0 and a Free Comic Book Day issue are out in May. Civil War #1 follows in June.

DATE

12-14 August

LOCATION

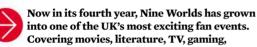
Novotel Londor

West

COME TOGETHER

The UK's friendliest "geekfest", Nine Worlds, returns with a new West London

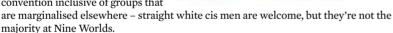
venue and even more to do



science, animation and more, it's a wildly diverse event that caters for every taste. We talked to event director Daniel Johnston to find out more.

How would you sum up the Nine Worlds ethos?

Maximal inclusivity. We don't think some interests are legitimate and others not - if you're passionate about it, then that's good. As a result, we run a diverse slate of content: 350 panels, workshops and performances covering 35 subject areas last year. We also work hard to make the convention inclusive of groups that



How has the event changed this year?

• We've changed the content structure. We're grouping things into nine themes and opening up session-organising to more people and more individual subjects.

And you're in a new venue, correct?

Yes. Hammersmith is a lot more central and easier for Londoners and people using public transport to get to, and there are more options for food and accommodation.

What can you tell us about the new expo?

We've always had vendors, but this is our first year with a separate expo. The hall's just the right size to get a good mix of vendors, exhibitors and social space, plus we'll have all of the convention signings in there.

What have been some of the highlights of past events?



Mine include a wedding proposal on stage in 2014; Miltos Yerolemou's brilliant swordplay workshops (left); a fireside chat between Rhianna Pratchett and Cara Ellison; a discussion on sex work in Game Of Thrones with a panel made up of sex workers; and last year's room-sized Sunday night blanket fort.

Nine Worlds takes place 12-14 August at Novotel London West. https://nine worlds.co.uk; www.facebook.com/ thenineworlds; @London_Geekfest

DATE LOCATION es, Charing Cro Road, London

SPACEMEN TWO

This is your chance to meet The Medusa Chronicles authors Stephen Baxter and Alastair Reynolds!



Join top SF authors Stephen Baxter (left) and Alastair Reynolds

in celebrating the launch of their new novel. The Medusa Chronicles. The pair will be appearing at the Charing Cross branch of Foyles at 3pm on 4 June - an exciting collaboration between Foyles, publishers Gollancz, the Arthur C Clarke Award and the one-and-only SFX! The book is a sequel to Arthur C Clarke's classic novella, AMeeting With Medusa, and charts the continuing adventures of space pilot Howard Falcon. Now rebuilt as a cyborg, Falcon's relationship with the rest of humanity shifts as machine intelligences begin to rise.

The Clarke Award's Tom Hunter will be interviewing the duo and this will be a great opportunity to meet the authors, get a signed copy of the book and find out more about their exciting collaboration. The full Clarke Award shortlist will be revealed on 27 April. •

www.foyles.co.uk/events www.clarkeaward.com

COMING

HORRORCON UK

Kane "Jason Voorhees" Hodder and Doug "Pinhead" Bradley are heading up this two-day fright fest in Rotherham, alongside an array of authors and other horror notables. http://horror

STAR WARS **CELEBRATION EUROPE III**

conventions.co.uk

15-17 July The annual Star Wars event comes to the UK! Expect panels, guests (still to be announced) and no doubt a few exciting Rogue One reveals www.starwars

AMECON

celebration.com

Anime, manga and cosplay are the focus of this twoday fan-run event in Warwick though the event is also famous for its nightly parties.

https://amecon.org

WORLD OF WIZARDRY

6-7 August This unofficial Harry Potter con takes place in Nottingham and features Zoe Wanamaker, Hugh Mitchell (who played the stalky Colin Creevey) and a host of goblin actors. www.daydream events.uk/world -of-wizardry.html

SCI-FI WALES

Llandudno is the place to be for the North Wales SF event - now in its second year. Expect panels, photo ops, guests (still TBC) and lots of fun at the Venue Cymru. www.scifi.wales

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The original novel, by Ransom Riggs, was a New York Times bestseller for over a year.

MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN

Super-powered kids in a remote mansion? No, it's not the X-Men...



"There's a place I go when I want to be alone." Ella Purnell's Emma leads young Jacob Portman (Asa Butterfield) to a shipwreck.



It's a demonstration of her "peculiarity" controlling air. She promises to show Jacob her other secrets as long as he doesn't freak out.



🥻 That involves taking him to the titular home for peculiar children - a beautiful mansion hidden away from the rest of the world.



🏂 There Jacob meets Eva Green's arch, Mary Poppins-like Miss Peregrine, the director of the orphanage in guestion.



There are many other gifted children there, including Millard Nullings, an invisible boy who likes to play football.



...and these two creepy masked kids, who appear to have escaped from our nightmares.



🚺 Then there's Claire (Raffiella Chapman) - a "backmouth" who munches things with a secondary gob. Bad table etiquette if you ask us



They live together "where no one can find us", hiding from a society that would fear them. Looks like that might be about to change.



🏠 "I knew you were one of us when you were born," says Miss Peregrine, slightly awkwardly. And indeed Jacob will discover his own powers



Jacob is told that he was "born to protect" And it certainly looks like the home will need his help against this spooky wraith-like creature.



..not to mention Samuel L Jackson's menacing Barron, with his glowing blue eyes and Mister Glass hair.



Especially because Miss Peregrine appears to take off - literally, by turning into a bird - and leave the kids to fend for themselves.

The Buzz



RICH It's been a long, long time since I've loved a Tim Burton movie, but this has the

potential to be a return to form The story is certainly ideal Burton territory and I like the cast



WILL Doesn't do it for me. I'm afraid - it looks twee as heck. I wish Burton would break

away from his tired visual tropes and make something low-key and stripped down like Ed Wood again.



RHIAN I like the look of this. Eva Green looks and sounds - amazing and Asa Butterfield has

already shown us he can combine just the right sense of oddness with solid emotional acting

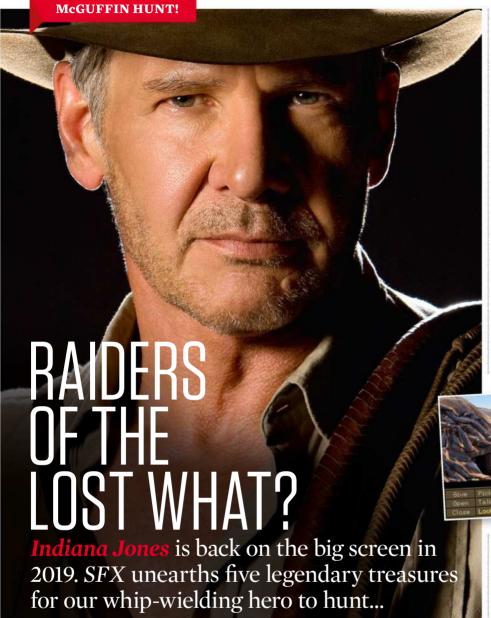


IAN So, X-Men Victoriana then, basically? Not exactly a radical shift of direction for Tim Burton, but it seems rather sweet and charming, and the total

absence of Johnny Depp is a relief.



Unmade '80s film Indiana Jones And The Monkey King saw Indy chasing immortality-bestowing peaches.



INDIANA JONES and the **OUEST FOR THE LAST GODDESS**

Athena Parthenos was a towering statue

of the Greek goddess of art and reason, created from gold, jewels and carved ivory. The most

magnificent cult image in ancient Athens, it vanished from historical record. just like the Ark of the Covenant (one account last places it in 10th century Constantinople). Greek mythology would be fresh and thrilling territory for Indy – just imagine Spielberg homaging all those great old Harryhausen films - and the sun-struck Mediterranean landscapes could be a dazzling backdrop.

INDIANA JONES and the SWORD OF CAMELOT

Excalibur, the fabled sword of King Arthur, might be the artefact that finally lures Indy to British shores. Celebrated in 12th century verse as "the finest sword that there was, which sliced through iron as through wood", the enchanted blade was entrusted to Arthur by Ninianne, the Lady in the Lake, and possessed the power to blind one's enemies. Its magical scabbard was also said to prevent bleeding - useful for any archaeologist whose fieldwork involves an improbable amount of grievous bodily harm.

INDIANA JONES and the UNDERSEA KINGDOM

The Man with the Hat uncovered the world's most legendary lost civilisation in 1992 computer game Indiana Jones And The

> Fate Of Atlantis but there's still sizeable cinematic potential in the drowned continent. It could also be an ace opportunity for the first aquatic Indy adventure, filled with sharks, subs and spectacular Spielbergian

visuals of underwater ruins. Plato placed Atlantis "beyond the pillars of Hercules" but there are claims for its remains everywhere from Antarctica to the Bahamas to the Azores. Prime globe-hopping potential, then.

INDIANA JONES and the **BOOK OF THE GODS**

Indy's never ventured into the cursed realms of Egyptology on the big screen but the Book of Thoth would be the perfect pretext for an adventure among the pyramids. The work of the ancient Egyptian god of knowledge, it's said to contain two spells, one that allows you to understand the speech of animals - hello, Indiana Dolittle - and another that grants the reader the power to perceive the gods themselves. Bad news for our snake-averse tomb-plunderer: the book was originally guarded by Nile serpents... •

Indiana Jones 5 opens on 19 July 2019.

INDIANA JONES and the SACRED SPEAR

The Spear of Destiny is a potent mythic object in the Judeo-Christian tradition of the lost Ark and the Holy Grail. Owned by a Roman

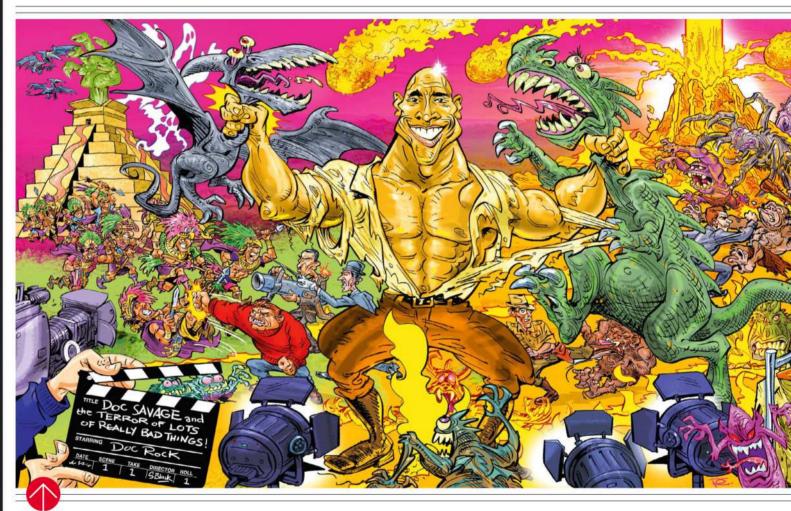
centurion named as Longinus in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, it's the lance that pierced the side of Jesus during the crucifixion. A sensationalist 1973 book by Trevor Ravenscroft claimed Hitler was obsessed with this New Testament treasure, a relic with the power to exert a sinister influence on mankind's destiny.





DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future



THE BRONZE AGE!

DOC SAVAGE

Shane Black has found his Man of Bronze. Stand down, Tom Jones - it's none other than the Rock who's in his sights. "Doc Savage is sort of in the ether now," Black tells Thrillist. "We're hoping to make it sometime next year. I would very much like to do Doc with a fellow named **Dwayne** Johnson if we can make that

work. I made a decision that Dwayne is the guy. It's on the back burner while he's busy." We like to imagine "busy" for the Rock involves racing supercharged muscle cars while casually saving California from a monster earthquake. A globe-trekking high adventurer from the 1930s golden age of American pulp magazines, Doc last came to the screen in 1975. It's a dream

project for Black, a lifelong fan of the character. "If [people are] introduced to it they'll get to know, hopefully, what I came to love as a kid."

SEA CHANGE

AOUAMAN

OCrazed maverick James Wan vows his take on Aquaman will inject a volatile compound called fun into the gloomy proto-matter of the DC Universe. "Even my darker horror films generally are still very fun and I think that's important for me and the kind of films I make," the Conjuring helmer declares. "Aquaman is a character that a lot of people have made fun of over the years and I just think it's fun to actually show a really different, cool, badass side to this character, but



at the same time, let's not forget to have fun with him." We repeat: fun. Wan's also excited by the prospect of some deep water exploration. "Isn't it crazy to think that we've explored space more than we have explored the depths of our ocean?" he asks Slashfilm. "That just fires up my imagination about potential sea monsters and cool creatures." The Rum Diary's Amber Heard has just signed on as Mera, superpowered Queen of Atlantis.

THE BATFLECK RISES!

BATMAN

Den Affleck's Dark Knight just about escaped the omnisuck of Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice with his dignity intact. Now comes word that he's still committed to bringing his own vision of the Gotham guardian to the big screen. "There's a script that he's written which is a really cool idea," his longtime agent Patrick Whitesell tells The Hollywood Reporter. Affleck collaborated on the screenplay with DC Comics supremo Geoff Johns, and BVS helmer Zack **Snyder** believes the triple-threat star will direct it, too: "Oh yeah, for sure. I think [directing it] is kind of the prerequisite, hopefully, for him doing it." **Kevin Smith** - who directed Affleck in Chasing Amy and Mallrats - believes he'll take the BVS flak to heart. "I guarantee you he's read everything... and he's like, 'Okay, these are all the pitfalls my script isn't going to fall into." Bring on the sunshine and Bat-puppies, Ben.

WHIP-CRACK AWAY!

INDIANA JONES 5

Shorty, we're home... Yes, it's a done deal: Harrison Ford will reunite with Steven Spielberg on a fifth Indiana Jones movie, set for release 19 July 2019. "I've always thought there was an opportunity to do another," Ford tells the BBC with a roguish scowl, "but I didn't want to do it without Steven. And I didn't want to do it without a really good script. And happily we're working on both. Steven is developing a



→ Skyfall's

Marlohe

joining

Hartnett in sci-fi fantasy Valley Of The Gods... Robi joining Blade Runner 2... Night At The Museum's directing Starman remake for Sony... David Oyelowo and Gugu Mbatha-Raw orbiting JJ Abrams's God Particle... Akiva Goldsman writing adap of Doctor Sleep, Stephen King's sequel to The Shining... Bad Robot adapting Greg Grunber graphic novel Dream Jumper.. Live-action **Fullmetal** Alchemist on its wav... Bradley Cooper starring in oceanic tale Deeper, from a script by Max Landis... Warner Bros planning a **Speedy Gonzales** movie... Disney adapting Charlie N Holmberg's YA trilogy The Paper Magician... Oscar Isaac joining Alex Garland's Jeff Annihilation. Goosebumps's Robert Lettermar in the frame to direct Dungeons & Dragons for Warner Bros...
Paul McCartney cameoing in Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales... Zendaya joining Spider-Man reboot... *Wonder* Woman writer penning a

Lobo movie...

66 I think it's fun to show a different, cool, badass side to this character 🤧

script now that I think we're going to be very happy with." The screenplay will be written by **David Koepp**, the man who penned Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull - no, listen, they have top men working on it right now... top men... And franchise veteran Frank Marshall produces alongside Lucasfilm supremo Kathleen Kennedy. Given the time that's passed since the '50s capers of Skull, will this one see Indy adventuring in the late '60s? Easy Riders Of The Lost *Ark*, anyone?

ENDLESS PAIN!

SANDMAN

The Dreaming is over for Joseph Gordon-Levitt. He was set to direct - and potentially star in - New Line's adaptation of **Neil Gaiman's** epic slice of comic book mythology. Now he's gone, just as the studio announces that Final Destination 5's **Eric Heisserer** will take a shot at the screenplay, working from a treatment by **David Goyer**. "A few months ago I came to realise that the folks at New Line and I just don't see eye to eye on what makes Sandman special," says Gordon-Levitt, "and what a film adaptation could/should be. So unfortunately I decided to remove myself from the project. I wish nothing but the best for the team moving forward." A potential film version of Sandman has been tormented by the flames of Development Hell since the mid '90s, but Gaiman, an executive producer on this one, remains zen. "For me, what's important is the 2,500 pages of Sandman, not a movie that may or may not ever happen."

FURTHER MUTATIONS!

THE NEW MUTANTS

• We may well see some familiar genetic material in The New Mutants, Twentieth Century Fox's next evolution of the X-Men universe. Based on the '80s Marvel title that introduced a fresh generation of gifted youngsters, it's rumoured to include Alexandra Shipp - Storm in X-Men: Apocalypse – and **James** McAvoy's Professor X as connective tissue to the core films in the franchise. "Traditionally the New Mutants have some characters that cross over from the mainline X-Men movies." hints producer **Simon Kinberg**. "I would say it's likely that you will see some familiar faces." Newcomers to Xavier's school are said to include a couple of rising genre stars: The Witch's Anya **Taylor-Joy** as the sorcerous Magik, sister of Colossus, and Game Of Thrones' Maisie **Williams** as Scottish lycanthrope Wolfsbane. The Fault In Our Stars' Josh Boone directs.

CROFT'S ORIGINAL!

TOMB RAIDER

So you've just starred in one of the most humongous blockbusters in movie history. What do you do for an encore? If you're Star Wars: The Force Awakens star **Daisy** Ridley - and odds are you're not - then you're up for a spot of grunty treasure-plundering in the Lara Croft reboot. "There have been conversations," she tells The Hollywood Reporter. "I'm waiting for someone to say, 'I want you, let's do it!" Ridley chased the role on the advice of fellow Star Warrior - and gamer - John Boyega, who thought she'd be perfect for the younger, more grounded take on Lara inspired by 2013's game reboot. "Making Lara Croft feel like a real human being, that's definitely something we want to bring to the big screen," director Roar Uthaug tells IGN. "I'm hoping to bring some of my Norwegian sensibilities to the franchise... We'll want to make it feel like a modern action movie and make what's going on feel like it's going on for real." •

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Not all guests signing all days, are charging for autographs and appear subject to work commitments.





IIII SFX HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN! IIII First Contact



THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

NICK SETCHFIELD, **FEATURES EDITOR**



Set phasers to party! Break out the Romulan Ale! Snog a Gorn!

anniversary of the USS Enterprise's first voyage. There's a new movie and TV show on their way but can Star Trek last another five decades? That's the question we posed for this month's Hot Topic – and you gave us your opinions at transwarp speed. You can write to us about anything, in any universe just lock your targeting systems on the handy addresses across

Hot Topic Your views on the month's big issue

#THE FUTURE OF STAR TREK

- Simon Kalie, Facebook If they take a leaf out of Abrams' book and take everything people love about the older shows and build on it in a new way then it will find a fan base. If they try to reinvent the wheel like Enterprise then it will fail miserably.
- Emmet O'Brien, Facebook It needs to explore some stuff it used to shy away from - how homosexuality is represented in the 23rd/24th century, for example. DS9 had some interesting political stuff and that should be expanded on. I want to know how things in this universe work outside of people joining up to Starfleet. Duggie MacFlufferty, Twitter I hope it does last another 50 years but I feel the next generation won't be as into it as my generation and the one
- Ochristopher Drewett, Facebook I'd like to see a show that followed the starship that had to try and correct all the time travel foul-ups caused by Kirk, Picard and Janeway etc...

SFX Love this idea, Star Trek: Ouantum Cock-up Control. Pitch it to Paramount, Chris!

- Thomas Heiberg Nøhr, Facebook No new crinkly forehead aliens. No time travel. No technobabble. No dragging out the usual "will they, won't they" milking of sexual tension between main characters. They're adults and can bloody flirt, like in real life.
- Craig Hayman, email Forget the starship stuff. Let's have a Game Of Thrones style saga charting the rise of the Klingon empire, full of bloodshed, intrigue and betrayal. Quapla! **SFX** Why would you need this when you've got the Conservative party?
- Matt Boardman, Facebook Let it die gracefully. Dan Thorpe, Facebook Star Trek needs to evolve for our modern era. The concept is fine - it's the execution of the shows that needs fine-tuning. Needless to say Star Trek will always live on through the spirit of human endeavour and our desire to face the unknown.
- Linden Lyons, Twitter Empires rise and fall so perhaps a series on the decline of the Federation a century after Voyager?
- John Isles, Facebook Keep exploring the final frontier - the sense of adventure, wonder and showing the best and worst of humanity.
- ndrew Gilbertson, email As a fan I would love to see new Star Trek set in Gene Roddenberry's original universe, pushing forward in the 24th



the page...

First Contact

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66 It needs to explore some stuff it used to shy away from 99

century. But honestly, the year and universe are just set dressing. As long as the writing is there, any universe can produce great Trek – it's all in what kind of stories you're trying to tell. My hope is that it returns strongly to TV, focused first on strong characters and second on moral messages that can reach and challenge both sides of the political aisle equally. That kind of timelessness and universality are the only way $\it Star \, Trek$ can successfully survive the next 50 years; by returning to what it had when Star Trek was at it's best.

Skeith Tudor, Romsey My hope for the future of Star Trek is to see DS9 released on HD, and for the new series to capture the feel, the adventure, the action, the moral dilemmas and the fun of the original series where the crew get on and support each other and the majority of the conflict comes

from the weekly encounters. December 1 Leonardo Ceccarello, Twitter Any future with Star Trek in it is a good one.

SFX A most logical response, Leonardo.



marks. he's

getting set..





#DISCOVERING MARS

James Kinsley, Norwich I was perusing a back issue of your fine magazine recently and I came across a short piece that piqued my interest about a film that was in production back then called Mars, directed by Geoff Marslett. Figuring it might have been released by now, I tracked down a copy on DVD (not easy to come by in this country, although I tweeted Marslett himself and he swiftly came back to me with a few ideas). Long story short, I finally got to sit down and watch it, and what an amazing slice of weird hipster animated science fiction it is. The cast alone is a treat, the likes of Kinky Friedman, James Kolchalka, Howe Gelb and Don Hertzfeldt all popping up alongside the ever watchable Mark Duplass. Laugh-out loud funny, extremely sweet and beautiful to look at, I'd have never discovered this gem without, SFX. It's a crying shame it doesn't appear to have a release in this country (yet).

Your coverage of the big stuff (MCU, Who etc) is always reliable, but thanks for the weirder stuff you slip in there too. SFX Glad we could be of service,

James. We're always here for the weirder stuff in life. Just look into our eyes. The things we've seen... the things we've reviewed.

#PESKY WEB-SLINGER

Stephen McAfee, Co Antrim Loved the new Civil War trailer but should they have shown Spider-Man like that? I think not. It seems like it's his first meeting with Cap's side - presumably not the audience's first sight of him as I can only assume we'll see him and Tony meet at some point beforehand. On the other hand I understand the reason for it from a marketing point of view, and here I shall ask my question. Do Marvel even need to advertise? If they dropped an unannounced Spider-Man movie a week later the internet buzz would send it through the roof. We'd all watch it and, I'm guessing, we'd enjoy it more because we weren't expecting it and hadn't seen a single scene from it. Should Marvel try the JJ approach and just drop a movie with no trailers or posters? Yes, please! sFx Great idea, Stephen. Even better: Marvel perfect time travel technology, erase Fox's Fantastic Four films from the timeline and substitute their own. Hey, everyone check their DVD shelves – maybe they've already pulled this stunt... →

First Contact



#ALL A-QUIVER

Daul Weatherhead, Hungerford Am I the only one who feels Oliver Queen is getting sidelined in his own show? Whenever there's a need to go after a bad guy they decide that all four of Team Arrow needs to take down one man. Then when they get there, they seem to always end up in a situation where one at a time they fight the bad guy, leaving you questioning what the other three are doing. Then when that one gets in trouble another magically turns up just in time to save the day.

Furthermore shouldn't there be more arrows actually being fired? SFX Cutbacks, man. We've already seen a 10% reduction in the show's leather hoodies quota. They'll be slashing the budget for gratuitous abs shots next, just you wait.

#READER VS READER

Mike Poole, Bexhill My family and I went to our local multiplex on 25 March and saw a film no one appears to have seen. It was thoroughly excellent, thoughtprovoking, difficult to predict, well-acted and highly exciting.

It was called Batman Vs

I think there must have been another film of that name out the same week, because I have seen a large number of ranting, raving comments decrying this other film as, amongst other things, "A stink bucket of disappointment".

Unless these reviewers are sadly deluded, or rabid Marvel fans unwilling for there to be two major franchises in the superhero market, then they must have been watching some other film.

Was it too long? Yes - by about 10 minutes. Did it have a different tone to Marvel? Yes - and surely that's a good thing?

What I found fascinating was that it made it entirely believable that Batman would think Superman was a menace that he needed to put down. It was also clever how the playing field was levelled. This is perhaps the best Bruce Wayne we have seen, plus a brilliant Superman and a fascinating new Wonder Woman. All in all, we came out smiling and happy, having had a thrilling cinematic ride, with an intelligent plot, to which you had to pay attention to follow the film.

Wait a minute, perhaps I see now why a lot of reviewers didn't get it...

Mike Garner, Moorends What a complete waste of two hours. That

66 Shouldn't there be more arrows

film missed the point by a mile. It looked at what Marvel was doing and tried to be something different. Unfortunately it tried to be serious and grown up, like hipsters "try" to be different. The entire film seemed forced and nothing felt organic. The best thing was the one thing everyone thought would ruin it - Batfleck. He played grizzled protector very well and acted his ass off to try and make the film make sense. It had no soul, no humour and no intelligent storytelling. Daredevil vs Punisher treated the "what is good, what is bad?" question so much better in Daredevil and Arrow and Flash have done team-ups so much better. They need better writers if they want to keep the franchise afloat. They need MUCH better writers if they want to challenge Marvel. **SFX** You can see what I made of it on page 92. It's not pretty, I'm afraid. I console myself that on one of DC's multiple Earths we got a masterpiece.









Timothy Williams, Richmond So, I wrote a letter. It was quite an angry letter about the Hot Topic piece on Clara Oswald, which seemed very unjustly biased in favour of negative comments, and I felt the impression it gave of fandom was wrong. The next thing I knew. I was told a recent letter from an Emma Watts had declared me part of a "crazed fandom, comparable to fascism" (crikey).

I do feel for Emma when she says "That nastier, more insecure side of fandom has ruined it for me" and "Where is our tolerance for an even-handed debate that doesn't degenerate into insults?" It



was the seeming validation of the former and the absence of the latter that caused my letter in the first place. Sorry if it gave the wrong impression in some way, and also for any lives lost during my reign of terror (always end on a Hartnell reference, kids). SFX Let us clutch our lapels, stumble over the name Chesterton and move on.

#WE ALSO HEARD FROM

Neil Hickman Samantha Mulder wasn't the victim of a serial killer [SFX 269]! That was teased in season four's "Paper Hearts" but Tom Noonan's creepy killer was faking Mulder out. Samantha was abducted by aliens but returned to the Cigarette Smoking Man and raised alongside Jeffrey Spender. Peter Smith, Facebook Re: Indiana Jones. It's always made me laugh that some people have a problem with Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull and the "aliens", but they have no problem at all with a "weapon from God" or a "cup of immortality". I know which I think is more credible. SFX You will become a true believer... [laughs like Mola Ram, rips still-beating heart from chest,

reaches for Wet-Wipes].



Your sci-fi memorabilia valued by the experts from auctioneers Vectis

→ Ed Clarke sent us photos of some actual film clobber he won in a competition. "I won this costume in a competition run by *Total Film*. It was run in support of the release of Sunshine. Being a bit of a sci-fi fan I thought I'd have a go. They asked what the mean density of the sun was. It's one of the best things I've won. A good reason to enter competitions!



KATHY TAYLOR OF VECTIS SAYS:

Danny Boyle's Sunshine (2007) is set in 2057, when our Earth is at risk from the dving sun. A spacecraft. Icarus II, is sent on a mission to re-ignite the star with a nuclear bomb

This prize is a two-piece suit worn by Captain Kaneda (Hiroyuki Sanada). Kaneda sacrifices himself during a spacewalk, while carrying out repairs to the shield panels. The outfit is in great condition, and has been authenticated by the Prop Store of London - it's essential that items like this come with a provenance and authentication, otherwise it may just prove to be a bit of cosplay! Auction estimate would be £200-£300.

If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo of your item with a few words about what it means to you, to sfx@futurenet.com, using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT.



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"It looks like you've skinned a goth cat"

First Contact

INDIANA JONES 5



That obtainer of rare antiquities is back – and he still looks like Harrison Ford Illustration by Paul Garner

6 0 L

LISTEN UP, SPIELBERG AND FORD! PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT OUR READERS WANT OR THEY'LL TURN YOU INTO RELICS!

ACKNOWLEDGE THE FRANCHISE'S HISTORY

There's been a lot of years and mileage since Raiders Of The Lost Ark, but you want the filmmakers to make sure they hark back to what made the first three movies classics. "A John Williams score, lots of snakes and spiders, epic landscapes, creepy tombs, huge stunts and some witty one-liners," suggests Laura Meakin.

SEND THE ALIENS HOME

The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull's extraterrestrial McGuffin annoyed the hell out of you, prompting loud calls for a return to quests for religious artefacts. "The series seems to work best with Biblical relics but what's left?" asks Tom Gray. [We've got some ideas on p23 - Edl. "The Librarian nicked the Spear of Destiny. The True Cross, perhaps?"

QUALITY VILLAINS



On the subject of baddies, one word crops up more than any other: "Nazis".

Unless Indy bumps into his old foes on the run in Argentina, however, some of you think it would be better if the movie pits him against Soviet enemies. "Given the probable time period it's got to be the USSR," says Richard Martin. "Maybe Spielberg could draft in his Bridge Of Spies mate Mark Rylance?"

FAREWELL MUTT

Aside from the aliens and nuked fridges, the thing you definitely don't want to see back is Shia LaBeouf as Indy's son, Mutt Williams, "No Shia LaBeouf for the love of god!" yells Troy Kessler.

MAKE SURE IT'S GOOD!

Kingdom Of The Skull was a painful experience for many fans - so you're putting a *lot* of pressure on *Indv 5* to redeem the franchise. "It would be great for the Indy saga to end on a good, strong story, that also serves as a nice conclusion for the character," suggests Gary Mancini. "That said, I don't want Indy killed off, just a retirement."

And that's not all they want... ��

- → M Lussier I would love to see the complete and utter absence of Shia LeMutt
- → Cornelius Karnak Nazis. → John Gray I'd like the final Indiana Jones to be shot using the same film as the older films, with no CGI unless it is truly necessary - in the style of Mad Max. It should have a supernatural relic as its McGuffin, no sci-fi. Go light on the "old guy" jokes - there were plenty in Crystal Skull. As with Han Solo, Indy shouldn't be a grumpier version of the character we love, he should just be Indy. Acknowledge his age but don't harp on about it. → PM Lowdon Harrison Ford proved he could still do Han Solo so I

reckon he can still do Indy. I think..

- → Shaun Watson A new father-son movie that ignores Crystal Skull would be cool - and at least get the right casting this time.
- → Medium Atomic Unlike with Bond I can't imagine the franchise working without Ford, so by the time 2019 comes round I'm hoping Indy stumbles across a time portal transporting him to the present day where he can discover such valuable treasures as mobility scooters and stairlifts.
- → Claire Stevenson Don't pretend he's still in his fifties - this has to be a movie about an old man.
- → Darrell "Daz" Preece Have Ford be the grandfather who leads his son and grandson in search of the stolen Ark of the Covenant. Then
- have Sean Connery appear as the great-grandfather who gets in the way. [Er, didn't they say that Henry Jones Sr had died before the events of Crystal Skull? And isn't the Ark still in a box in Area 51? - Ed]
- → Christine Barley No Shia, no aliens - that sums it up!
- → Robert Minty Sigh. Can't Steven Spielberg turn his talents to something brand new, and not just rehash an old favourite? If not, I'd prefer to see Duel 2!
- → Darth Sean No Shia LaBeouf for starters, no fridges and no damn alien involvement!
- → Steven Adams For it not to be made - after the last one they should just leave it alone
- → Michael Van Kesteren Atlantis!



First Contact







IT by Stephen King, 1986

Author **Seanan McGuire** sings the praises of a horror master



You can't get away from Stephen King. He's as

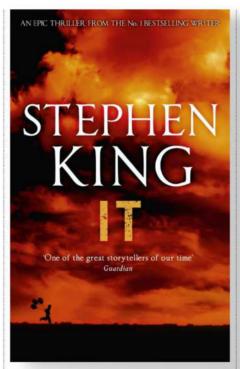
recognisable as a movie star (and has been a movie star, several times). He helped to define the modern shape of

the horror world. As a child with a passion for the macabre, he was second only to Vincent Price in my personal pantheon, and I campaigned relentlessly to be allowed to read his work. Bit by bit, I wore my mother down, until I was granted permission to begin working my way through King's oeuvre.

I loved everything I read. I was an uncritical, ravenous reader. Until the day I picked up a book with a clawed hand reaching through a sewer grate, and learned what it really was to fall in love with a work of fiction.

It is a hard book for me to talk about, which is ironic, given that I talk about it constantly. I fell in love with it so hard and so completely, at such a young age, that there is absolutely no way for me to be objective about it. This book is one of the ones that made me. Because of that. there are things I just can't see, no matter how hard I look for them. It is a hard book to talk about, period, because it's huge. Some people view it as King's best work, and they're not wrong. Others view it as sprawling and self-indulgent, and they're not wrong either.

Something terrible is happening in the city of Derry, Maine. Businesses tend to thrive there; disasters that befall cities of similar size and similar economic standing tend to pass it by. But every 27 years, the wheel turns round, and tragedies haunt the sleepy streets. Children disappear, and while their parents mourn, other adults seem to almost brush it off, as if it were normal. Tempers flare. Things worsen



over the course of a summer, until they culminate in a huge, catastrophic event that can claim hundreds of lives, and which ends the cycle... at least for another 27 years.

Every cycle, most of the dead and disappeared are children. Every cycle, no one resists... until 1957, when a group of misfits, "the Losers Club", come together and successfully fight It, driving It away before the final catastrophe can occur. They swear a blood oath to come back if It ever returns before they

scatter to the winds, leaving only one of their number in Derry to keep the home fires burning: Mike Hanlon, who grows to become an amateur historian, tracing It's influence on the town, back to where everything began.

The adults return to Derry, now with adult concerns clouding their minds, and must ask themselves whether it is even possible for them to confront the ancient evil for a second time - and whether, if they do, there is any chance that they will be able to walk away.

There are issues with the book. Some of King's handling of Beverly (the sole female character to appear in both 1957 and 1984) is clumsy and even shockingly unnecessary, with sequences that made me uncomfortable when I was a child and still do now (and not in that good, squirmy way that horror can sometimes achieve). Some of the digressions from the main plot taper off into nothing, adding little to the text, and I know a lot of people who were disappointed with the ending, which can seem to come out of nowhere.

All told, whether you're a fan of King or have simply been looking for the one book that can tell you what all the hype is about, It remains a stellar outing from him. It was always a period piece about the 1950s; now it's a period piece about the 1980s as well. And that's just fine.

We all float down here.

Seanan McGuire's Ashes Of Honour is out now in paperback.

Like this? Try these! THE HALLOWEEN TREE

by RAY BRADBURY (1972)

→ There have always been fantasy stories about children adventuring around the edges of the adult world, but Bradbury's work may have set the tenor for everything after him.



THE THIEF OF ALWAYS by CLIVE BARKER (1992)

Barker's story of Harvey Swick, what he lost, what he gained, and what he refused to surrender is one that speaks to the child in everyone. Absolutely brilliant.







Opinion



ALL GOOD THINGS

David Langford bids us farewell after two decades with SFX



"TWENTY-ONE YEARS IS FAR TOO SHORT A TIME TO SPEND AMONG YOU – THIS IS THE END"

Illustration by Andy Watt

wenty-one years ago I wrote in SFX #1 about Harlan Ellison's long delayed anthology The Last Dangerous Visions (breaking news: still unpublished). I've been in every issue since then and hoped to make it to #300, but the harsh realities of modern publishing say otherwise.

So Thog, my connoisseur of Differently Good Prose, offers a farewell banquet of weird SF anatomy. His favourites – so tasty! – are eyeballs:

"Franklin left his eyes on the floor, took half a step backward." (Kelli Stanley, City Of Dragons.) "His eyes fixed like grappling hooks on AAri's face..."
(Rachel Pollack, Golden Vanity.) "...his eyes felt as if they had tendrils growing out of them, crawling like ants across the floorboards." (Sheng Keyi, Death Fugue.)
"Eyes like anguished talons were clutching hers." (Charles L Harness, The Rose.)

Brains: "The human's brain began to function once more; he could almost feel it sweating." (Poul Anderson and Gordon R Dickson, *Earthman's Burden*.)

Stomachs: "The pessimism of the twentieth century has been a massive burp of indigestion; but the stomach ache is passing." (Colin Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone.*) "Maybe her stomach knew what it was doing when it threw up her toenails." (Mike Shepherd, *Kris Longknife: Unrelenting.*)

Big Hair: "His unruly shock of red hair towered six feet above the floor..." (Edmond Hamilton, *Captain Future And The Space Emperor.*)

Lungs: "But at least in space I can breathe..." (EE Smith and Gordon Eklund, Lord Tedric.)

Rear End: "Her buttocks were fresh-baked loaves; they were ivory eggs, they were the eggs of the lonely phoenix. They were a fist." (Ron Miller, Silk And Steel.) "He felt once again the desire to bite his own backside in fury." (Andrzej Sapkowski, Blood Of Elves.) "There has to be a natural limit to how long anyone can spend like this, in a black aluminium suppository lodged in the asshole of the earth." (Garth Risk Hallberg, City On Fire.)

Faces: "His dark face was pale." (Terry Brooks, *The Wishsong Of Shannara.*) "Her face had the fragrance of a gibbous moon." (Ron Miller, *Silk And Steel.*) Plus a cheesy grin: "...I said through grated teeth." (Ioanna Bourazopoulou, *What Lot's Wife Saw.*)

Hearts: "His heart didn't have the strength to do much of anything, except pound, and beat, and maybe squat in his mouth..." (Gordon Eklund, *Space Pirates*.)

Legs: "The wind was shrieking, and so were her legs." (Kelli Stanley, *City Of*

Dragons.) "Her legs were quills. They were bundles of wicker, they were candelabra..." (Ron Miller, Silk And Steel.)

Naughty Parts: "Breasts like bronzed mangoes." "...her tits look like soft blue balloons." (Garth Risk Hallberg, *City On Fire.*) "The nipples rose like mercury with her heat." (Ron Miller, *Silk And Steel.*) "But when she took the warm shaft in her hands, she found that she did not know how to call upon its strength." (Stephen Donaldson, *The Runes Of The Earth.*) Oh, sorry, that was actually the Staff of Law.

Lastly, adapting the words of a famous fantasy character: though twenty-one years is far too short a time to spend among you – this is the END. I am going. I am leaving NOW. GOOD-BYE! (Puts on the Ring and vanishes.)

Watch ansible.uk for the announcement of David Langford's final SFX column collection, The Last SFX Visions.



Opinion



GRAPES OF ROTH

So the first reviews are in for the scene-forscene remake of Cabin Fever and much to no one's surprise, they're pretty negative. To recap: this is a "re-staging" according to Eli Roth, using exactly the same script as his 2002 original, with neophyte director Travis Zariwny shackled to the director's chair. Zariwny's 2p-worth is to have made it more real-world and less funny or timely so basically, he's taken the strongest features of the original and directed them out. I don't really blame the guy - directing Roth's vanity project, what a poisoned chalice! Got me thinking about what terms I'd have to be offered to take the helm on a remake of Hostel 2 (which I hate). Replace the whole cast with puppies, relocate to somewhere warm and exotic and let me "Alan Smithee" the credits, and Eli, I'm all yours!

THE MOMMY RETURNS

f you haven't yet had a chance to catch Goodnight Mommy, do so! This is the Austrian indie I mentioned a couple of issues back and it's very effective. The story of twin brothers who think their mum has been replaced by someone else after she comes back bandaged post-plastic surgery, it's itchily disturbing and the kids in it are brilliant. A properly nasty, surprisingly violent bit of psycho-horror, it's a teeny bit predictable, but despite that it's a must-see. Now directors Severin Fiala and Veronika Franz have signed with Universal for their studio debut. The Fortress focuses on refugees in a container ship whose path to a new life turns out to be not what it seems. There's not much more out there but I'd expect this to be English language. US debuts from international talent can be hit and miss. JA Bayona followed The Orphanage with excellent drama The Impossible while Pascal Laugier's English language debut The Tall Man was a disappointment. Park Chan Wook's Stoker was a wonderful film, while Alexandre Aja (Mirrors, Piranha 3D, The Hills Have Eyes) has never done anything in English as good as Switchblade Romance. And don't even talk to me about the brilliant Hideo Nakata (Ringu), whose English-language debut Chatroom was just hideo-us.

The Mummy returns, Eli Roth's debut is rebooted, my cynicism lingers...



ONE FOR THE MUMMY

Ouniversal has been on about rebooting its monster franchises for quite some time – an Avengers-style crossover universe where the Invisible Man and the Creature from the Black Lagoon get together to fight crime? Not imminently. No, instead we're getting another Mummy movie. This time it's set in the modern day, and the Mummy "himself", in a bit of bizarre reverse casting, will be played by beautiful young actress Sofia Boutella.

Transformers writer Alex Kurtzman will direct; Kurtzman is also down to produce a raft of other monster revivals including Van Helsing, The Wolfman and The Invisible Man. Not massively excited about any of those, either.

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

Call me cynical, but outside of The Conjuring's empire I feel like the whole future of mid-budget horror is pretty much down to Blumhouse right now. Ghosthouse Pictures has been disappointing, Hammer's biding its time, and other than The Purge, which they share with Blumhouse. Platinum Dunes seems to be thankfully leaving horror alone for a bit. Keep an eye out for The Darkness, then, due 13 May from Blumhouse and directed by Wolf Creek man Greg McLean. It stars Kevin Bacon and Radha Mitchell as part of a family holidaying in the Grand Canyon who bring back a dirtyfingered demon. The trailer is glossy, jumpy and scary, the production values are high and the concept is original. Another three-star masterpiece I'm going to thoroughly enjoy! •

Dreadful Thing To Do

Fancy chowing down on some edible entrails? How about nibbling on some very unique "finger" food? Check out The Homicidal Homemaker (http://www.thehomicidalhomemaker. com) for recipes and video tutorials hosted by the very watchable Kaci Hansen about how to make delicious horrorthemed treats.







FEMALE MONSTERS

Female characters don't have to be "good" to be progressive, says journalist and author *Maria Lewis*



"THE IDEA IS SIMPLE: LESS CORPORATE BITCHES, MORE ACTUAL WITCHES" ngels or whores. Mothers or madams. Virgins or tarts with heart. In the pop culture pantheon, few character tropes are more damaging than those assigned to women on the big screen. From Manic Pixie Dreamgirls to the archetype Strong Female Character, pigeonholing ladies has essentially been a profitable business model in Hollywood for the past, oh, say, 100 or so years. Yet thankfully, the times they are a changin' – largely thanks to women like Jennifer Lawrence and directors Ava DuVernay and Lexi Alexander, calling out sexist bullshit wherever they see it. More than ever, gender representation matters in movies. Female-led franchises are breaking box-office records, research from the Geena Davis Institute On Gender In Media is getting mainstream traction and "feminism" is no longer a dirty word avoided by Hollywood starlets like Jack Nicholson at an Oscars after-party.

Yet there's another battleground being marked. It's not enough to have more women on screen: they need to be racially, sexually and physically diverse. They also need to be monsters. For each leather-clad, emotionally unavailable "tough girl" there needs to be a complex villainess whose wrath extends outside the box. Everyone's imaginary best friend Natalie Portman summed it up best when she said: "The fallacy in Hollywood is that if you're making a 'feminist' story, the woman kicks ass and wins. That's not feminist, that's macho." In a similar vein, the sooner we start seeing sinister sisters on the big screen, the better we'll be.

Television and literature have been miles ahead of cinema for decades in this regard, giving consumers a refreshing cast of women antagonists. More recently *Gone Girl*'s Amy Dunne was a complex twist on the Reese Witherspoon "all American girl" archetype, offering audiences an antagonist whose motivations weren't completely unrelatable and who leapt off both the page and screen. Heck, even Julianne Moore's portrayal of President Alma Coin in *The Hunger Games* [left] was progressive in that it gave us a Claire Underwood (*House Of Cards*) of the dystopian future – a role we've seen played a thousand times before by men. In comics, there have been horrible honeys threatening to take over the world (Livewire), blow up the world (Jean Grey/Dark Phoenix), break your spine (Lady Deathstrike) or a combination of all three (Harley Quinn). Meanwhile film... sadly the maniacal performance of Charlize Theron's Evil Queen in *Snow White* or Jessica Chastain's "monstrous" lover in Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak* are few and far between. The idea is simple: less corporate bitches, more actual witches.

Hollywood's tendency to shy away from the feminine grotesque isn't helping anyone and instead depriving audiences of something special. In the modern horror movie pantheon, there's a reason Sonia Suhl and Katharine Isabelle's werewolves in *When Animals Dream* and *Ginger Snaps*, respectively, shine and it's the same reason Pinhead and Freddy Krueger have become iconic. A Strong Female Character doesn't need to be made so by giving her stereotypically masculine traits like physical strength – female roles don't need to be inherently "good" for them to be progressive. From the Joker to Darth Vader, some of cinema's most famous characters (and performances) are bad guys. Key word: *guys*. Gender representation behind the camera is important, so too is representation in front of it – monsters matter. •

Maria Lewis's debut novel, Who's Afraid?, is out on 14 July.

There's a whole universe to explore beyond this magazine THIS MONTH ON

THIS MONTH ON Jamesradar+



Five things to look out for on our massive entertainment portal at gamesradar.com/sfx

The Force Awakens is now out on DVD and Blu-ray and we've trawled all the special features and deleted scenes to suss out any Star Wars secrets that might have been hiding from us until now.

http://bit.ly/SFXTFAextras

With the second season of Daredevil now on Netflix we assume you've watched Matt Murdock and the Punisher go head-to-head, but how many Easter eggs did you spot? http://bit.ly/SFXDaredevileggs

The Walking Dead might be done for another season, but that doesn't mean we can't still learn from it. One thing it's taught us is that when the zombie apocalypse comes, it's other survivors you need to watch out for... http://bit.ly/SFXTWDhumans

Beheaded? Poisoned? Attacked by a boar while drunk? Find out what your Game Of Thrones-style death would be with our very scientific (not really) quiz.

http://bit.ly/SFXThronesdeath

Now that Batman V Superman is out all eyes have turned toward the Justice League movie. This is what we know so far. http://bit.ly/SFXJusticeLeague

check out *The Force* Awakens Blu-ray.

Magazines & Beyond 4

SFX ON THE RADIO!



The world's number one sci-fi and fantasy magazine - that's us – is embarking on an all-new mission in the audio frontier. Each month, SFX editor Richard Edwards is being

allowed out of the office to take part in the monthly Spoiler Alert podcast on Fubar Radio, joining hosts Claire Lim and Adam Johnson to talk about all things geek. There'll be chat about the hottest sci-fi/fantasy releases and the biggest genre news, interviews, and lots of other fun bits and pieces, all crammed into an action-packed two hours. You can download the Spoiler Alert podcast now at Fuba

THE SFX NEWSLETTER



Obviously picking up the latest SFX is one of the highlights of your month, but your fix of the world's number one sci-fi and fantasy magazine doesn't have to end there. Sign up

to SFX's email newsletter, and you'll get a little bit of the mag in your inbox every Friday, with prize giveaways, the week's genre news and the hottest features from GamesRadar+. If you're a new user and you sign up now you'll get a free download of SFX issue one! It'll make that long wait for the weekend to get started that little bit easier to take. http://bit.ly/SFXnewsletter



Whose side are you on? With . Civil War about to erupt in the MCU the Total Film crew goes behind the scenes of the latest Captain America movie with Chris Evans. Robert Downey Jr

and directors Joe and Anthony Russo making a case for Team Cap or Team Stark. Elsewhere, TF's mighty summer preview visits the set of X-Men: Apocalypse, chats Jason Bourne with Matt Damon and goes one on one with king of the swingers Alexander Skarsgard for The Legend Of Tarzan. So do a bit of swinging yourself and land in that trusty local newsagent..

1990S SPECIAL



From the makers Of Total Film and SFX comes this celebration of the decade that delivered a whole host of terrific movies to our screens. So expect lavish features on

the likes of Jurassic Park, Independence Day, The Matrix, Speed, Reservoir Dogs and The Shawshank Redemption on these big, shiny pages. What the hev, we've even got The Phantom Menace in there. Also, in a brand new feature we count up (or count down, take your pick) the 90 greatest things about the 90s. Fret not, John Major and Tony Blair aren't in there.

Next Issue

CONJURING 2

IT'S TIME TO GET SOME EXORCISE...

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- + Independence Day: Resurgence
- + Robert Kirkman's Outcast
- + Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2
- + The Living And The Dead

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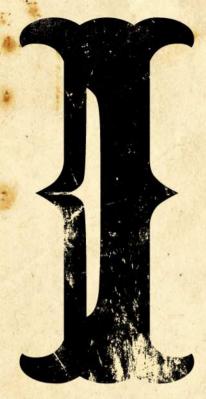


HELLFIRE

AND

BRIMSTONE

COMICS' MOST NOTORIOUS
SUPERNATURAL SAGA FINALLY
ARRIVES ON SCREEN.
JOSEPH McCABE ATTENDS
PRAYER SERVICE...



In an age when just about every genre of comic has yielded a faithful, successful movie or television incarnation, DC/Vertigo's line of dark fantasy sagas is still awaiting its turn. While superhero film fans got The Dark Knight, horror mavens got The Return Of The Swamp Thing. While The Flash raced up the TV ratings charts, Constantine was cancelled before its occult investigator could smoke his first cigarette on screen. But today's Golden Age of Television offers multiple opportunities for success or failure. And with genre shows like The Walking Dead and Game Of Thrones pushing the medium's boundaries, it was only a matter of time before Vertigo received its due. Enter Preacher.

BAD RELIGION

The brainchild of writer Garth Ennis (one of a handful of British scribes who transformed comics in the '80s and '90s), Preacher, in its 66-issue run, challenged every taboo in the industry as it chronicled the adventures of holy man Jesse Custer, whose crisis of faith coincides with his acquisition of supernatural powers and sets him on a road trip across America with girlfriend/firebrand Tulip and best friend/Irish vampire Cassidy. The series drew praise from scores of critics and won hordes of devoted fans, among them actor-director Seth Rogen and his work partner Evan Goldberg.

"Seth can have people killed with a phone call," says executive producer Sam Catlin of Rogen's influence in Tinseltown.

A veteran of the acclaimed Breaking Bad, Catlin explains to SFX that "Seth and Evan brought this project to me and have this enormous passion for it. They're super smart. I can't believe how much pot they smoke and

how much they get done in a day. It's amazing. They smoke pot and it acts like coke! They're so productive. They're super responsible. I think people are gonna be like, 'Wow! That's nothing like what they've directed!' The stuff they've directed is very broad comedy, but they're filmmakers. So I think people are gonna be super impressed and surprised. They're great collaborators. They've had every opportunity along the way to be dickish celebrity assholes, and they're just the nicest, most approachable guys. I love 'em.

"When I first read Preacher," Catlin admits, "I was like, 'That's not a TV show.' I hadn't read anything like it. It was completely chaotic, but in a way it all made sense. There were great characters, and the violence and the perversity and the sex... It was so crazy. I really didn't know where to start in terms of bringing this to TV. I've never seen anything like it. There was nothing like it on TV, so I couldn't really picture it. But hopefully that's why it's going to be so great. Because there's really nothing like it on TV. There may be a reason why there's nothing like it on TV. But we'll find out ..."

As Preacher's showrunner, Catlin's irreverence is perfectly suited for a story in which God isn't all that different from the devil, angels and demons mate and breed, and

66 When I first read Preacher I was like, 'That's not a TV show.' It was chaotic ??

THE BALLAD OF JESSE CUSTER

A brief history of Preacher

Writer Garth Ennis and artist Steve Dillon's Preacher made its debut in April 1995, Published by the Vertigo imprint of DC Comics, it followed the tradition set forth by Alan Moore's Swamp Thing, Neil Gaiman's Sandman and Jamie Delano's Hellblazer. Ostensibly about a small-town Texas holy man fused to Genesis, the unholy offspring of a demon and an angel. Ennis grew his tale to encompass and satirise all the absurdities of American life as only a British writer can.

In the 65 issues that followed (in addition to five Preacher one-shot specials and a four-issue limited series). Jesse found himself partnered with the hard-partying Irish vampire Proinsias Cassidy and his on-again-off-again girlfriend Tulip O'Hare, Together, the three took to the road in search of God, who left his **Heavenly flock when Genesis** was sired. Along the way, with Jesse's powers eventually



enabling him to force others to do his will, they encountered all manner of metaphysical menace. including the bounty hunter Saint of Killers and the perverted former anti-terror operative Herr Starr.

The most memorable of all Ennis and Dillon's creations was arguably Arseface. The son of an abusive father, this hapless lad earned his moniker after he tried to kill himself (inspired by his hero Kurt Cobain) but succeeded only in shooting most of his face off. His speech incomprehensible, he nonetheless became a singing sensation. Proving that in Ennis's America, anything is possible.





66 The sex is always the trickiest thing. People hand-wring over it 99

sexual investigators are hired to retrieve missing heroin and porn stars.

While the show's US network, AMC, allows violence like that depicted on The Walking Dead, Catlin admits Preacher's sexual content may provide a greater challenge.

"The people who make up the rules, they're just making it up as they go along," he laughs. "The sex is always the trickiest thing on TV. It's the thing that people hand-wring over the most. But it's an essential part of Preacher; it's an essential part of Jesse and Tulip's relationship. They have a very sexual relationship. But also there's this great subversive comedy around sex, throughout all of the show's characters. So we definitely want to honour that as much as we can."

In honouring both Ennis's epic and its readers, Catlin claims, "We're gonna go there until someone tells us 'No'. No one's said 'No' yet. I think everyone's waiting for someone else to tell us no... But yeah, we're gonna go there. Because the comic is like a romp. It's fun, it's



crazy, it's got all this sex. But also, Garth pulls no punches. Everyone, every institution is gonna get a black eye on this thing. That's part of Preacher, and we can't back down from that."

Some of the show's casting choices may at first surprise longtime fans of the comics, including native Londoner Cooper as the Texan Jesse. Catlin insists the cast honours the spirit of their characters. "Some of the characters, like Cassidy, he sort of looks like the guy from the comic. Tulip doesn't. But she's Tulip to us, and I think she will be to the viewers as well. There were some surprises along the way in terms of type."

ORIGIN STORY

Other surprises in store for longtime fans include the show's storyline, which begins at an earlier point than the comic book, in order to show how Jesse fared as a holy man before he gained his powers.

"In a lot of ways it's sort of a prequel to some of the events of the comic. So we're going to see Jesse as an actual preacher for a little bit longer than fans might be expecting. The way the comics are laid out, you just can't do that on TV because of the way it's paced. The locations, the being on the road, it's like a half-billiondollar TV show if you were to just do the comics.

"I can hear the fans saying, 'Well, get the fucking half billion dollars, dude! Shut up!" laughs Catlin. "But it's also a different way of telling a story than it is on a TV show. You sort of need to get to know the characters more. But that doesn't mean it's not the same crazy world. It's just a different way of telling the story. It wasn't until three of us figured out 'Where does it start?' that it felt... Okay, Jesse's in this little town. We'll take a little step back and say, 'Alright, what was he like when he was a preacher? He was probably a shitty preacher. But at least he was a preacher.' We see him already disillusioned. Already sort of breaking with God right when the comic starts. But in this we say, 'Let's actually roll it back just a

little bit and get a run at that.' That sort of helped in terms of where we could begin the show and how we could begin to tell the story of Jesse Custer... But one of the great things about Preacher is it skips time. You go back and forth, you go to all these different places."

Catlin references The Walking Dead when describing how Preacher will reach the same big moments as its source material, though the road it takes in reaching them might change. "How you get from A to Z ... as writers, if we're doing our job, we're hopefully surprising ourselves all the time."

The exec tells SFX that though Preacher is an original adaptation, he'd read screenwriter John August's Preacher adaptation for director Sam Mendes, who was at one point developing it for the big screen.

"There are a lot of great people who were attached to this over the years. And probably a lot of people doing a lot of second-guessing over 'How do we make a Preacher TV show?' Because the doors hadn't really been blown off the way they have now. Now we can be at AMC, where they say, 'Just go do it.' Because people have taken these other big swings at Walking Dead and stuff like that and realised, 'This can actually be really great and people might not actually be freaked out and run for the hills and start burning their TVs! It might actually be a hit!"

Preacher begins in the US on AMC on 22 May. UK broadcast is TBC.

GOD SAVE THEM ALL

The top 5 genre preachers

REVEREND HENRY KANE

Though nowhere close to the quality of Steven Spielberg and Tobe Hooper's original Poltergeist, 1986's Poltergeist II: The Other Side offered one memorable character in actor Julian Beck's mad undead minister, who's hellbent on claiming the soul of adorable little moppet Carol Anne Freeling

BROTHER JUSTIN CROWE

In his decades-long career, Clancy Brown has played every kind of heavy imaginable, from the original

Highlander's Kurgan to arch-villain Lex Luthor himself in Superman: The Animated Series. But his best baddie was arguably Carnivale's Methodist minister Brother Justin Crowe, who like Preacher's Jesse Custer has the ability to coerce others to follow his will.

FATHER SANG-HYUN

Park Chan-wook's Thirst (arguably the Korean director's best film) gave us a Catholic priest who takes part in a medical experiment that goes horribly awry, turning him into a vampire. His story really begins, however, when he falls in love with an abused housewife and makes the mistake of turning her.

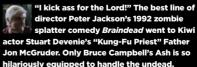
SHEPHERD DERRIAL BOOK



The tale of Firefly's heroic holy man was, like so much of Joss Whedon's beloved short-lived series, left largely, maddeningly untold. But in Whedon's sequel/ spin-off film Serenity, actor Ron Glass's character

was at least granted an end to his story.

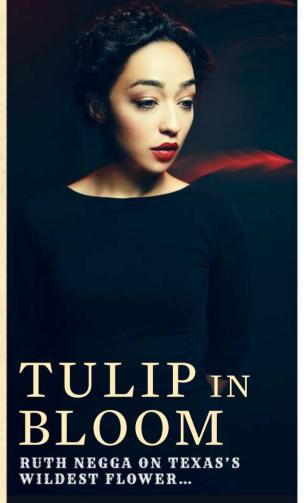
FATHER JON McGRUDER











Is the romance between Tulip and Jesse the romance to end all romances?

Like *True Romance*? I think it's better than that because when have you ever seen a romance that reflects the hatred you can have for someone you love? The pure ice-blue hate that you can have for someone you desire and want and love at the same time. It's never as simplistic as it's made out to be, is it? I mean, one of my favourite films is the original *Bonnie And Clyde*. That kind of taboo - you could literally kill someone.

What did you respond to in the Preacher comic?

The great thing about Garth [Ennis] is he will never tie up anything in a nice ribbon and bow. He'll go, "That's it. I'll give you this now. This is not an answer. It's a question, and it's a really fascinating question. I don't have the answer, and I'm not expecting you to have the answer. But think about it." To me, that's the most interesting thing that comics do. They don't really tie things up, do they? The good ones. They fucking crack open the really big questions... What is good? What is evil? Who is good? Who is evil? It's not straight down the line. Superheroes are always orphans aren't they? They're always broken children. That's lovely. There's something really lovely about [the idea that] none of us are irredeemable.

How often is Garth there on set? 4 He's never there. But he sees everything, and he occasionally will give you his blessing. Which is like being blessed by the Pope [laughs]. He's a quiet, gentle man with a deep, deep mind.

If you could be any other comic character beside Tulip, who would it be and why?

I would definitely be Catwoman. Because Eartha Kitt, she fucking killed it. It was a special thing when she came on. I just loved that.





W H O M



DESTROY



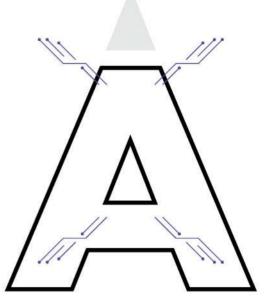
The end is nigh in X-MEN: APOCALYPSE.

Ian Berriman is on set as the mutants face their greatest threat yet...









All the old paintings on the tombs, they do the sand dance, don'tcha know... Sorry, SFX is suffering from a bad case of a Bangles earworm. We're standing at the sandaled feet of a giant jackal-headed statue - just one of four that tower 25-30 feet above us in a vast temple chamber. On the walls, friezes depict warriors armed with spears and bird-headed gods holding ankhs. The left-brain insists this is a movie set, but gazing around it's easy to get swept up in the illusion. We could be 6,000 years ago, transported to ancient Egypt. Well, if you ignore the plywood steps on the way, the scaffolding and the plastic sheeting protecting panels of hieroglyphics - one of which our guide pulls back to reveal an amusing detail: the familiar shape of the X-Men logo.

It's day 31 of 84 of principal photography on X-Men: Apocalypse, and we're at Mel's Studio in Montreal. Catching up with director Bryan Singer and screenwriter Simon Kinberg later, there's one thing we simply have to clear up: what's with those hieroglyphics? Has Professor Xavier been travelling back in time to dispense interior design tips?

"It means nothing," Singer laughs, "It's an inside joke. By the way, there are many more. There's a hieroglyph of a guy choking a chicken - you missed that! I don't know what that means in ancient Egyptian..."

While such details may not be significant, the ancient Egyptian setting certainly is. It's there we first encounter the Big Bad for this closing instalment of the prequel trilogy that began with First Class: the titular Apocalypse, whose belated introduction is an exciting development for fans of the comics. First seen in 1986, in X-Factor #5, he's the first mutant, born 5,000 years ago and endowed with god-like powers. A key arc of the '90s, Age Of Apocalypse, saw him conquering an alternate America radically reshaped by Professor Xavier's death. Though X-Men: Apocalypse →



won't tell that story, its topsy-turvy take on the X-universe has influenced Singer's thinking when it comes to characterisation.

"If you look at Age Of Apocalypse, everyone's roles are reversed." he explains. "I can't quite tackle that entire 50-plus book universe, but what I can do is find characters at places they were not at when we met them in X-Men."

The look of the '80s X-Men comics is another key influence. Simon Kinberg tells us.

"Visually, there's a ton from the '80s comics, in the colour of the costumes and some of the other aesthetics of the characters. We wanted it to look and feel different from the other movies - to be a unique experience."

TIME MANAGEMENT

And there's good reason to homage the era of the Rubik's Cube and Reagan. When we last visited the X-universe, it was 1973. Leaping forward another decade, this film sees Apocalypse waking in 1983, after lying dormant for centuries. And he's a mite peeved.

"He's a guy that went to sleep thousands of vears ago, in a world that - in his mind - was moving towards purity or perfection," Kinberg explains. "Then he wakes up in the most corrupted, polluted, disgusting time in our history - 1983! He's looking around at the '80s like, 'What the hell happened to my world? I'm gonna fix it.' And for him, fixing it means wiping it out and starting over."

It's a point of view far removed from the struggle for supremacy which powered the agendas of Magneto and Sebastian Shaw.

"The notion of mutant vs man is not that interesting to him," Kinberg explains. "He doesn't care about that. It's like if you came back, as a grown-up, to your childhood home and it was overrun with all kinds of awfulness - you'd be upset! So an aspect of his

BLUE

OSCAR ISAAC

on playing the X-universe's first mutant



The name Apocalypse suggests that he's all about destruction but is there more to it than that?

Well, he's the embodiment of the

biblical apocalypse, and what that's about is Jesus Christ returning and destroying the world, and saving those that escape the wrath of God. And remember that Apocalypse doesn't mean destruction; it actually means the revelation. It's to reveal, to lift back the curtain - and that became a refrain He's revealing not only the plan, but revealing each person's individual power to themselves; their full potential

How on earth do you research playing a role like this? Can you?

I read quite a bit of the Bhagavad Gita, a lot of the conversations that Krishna has when he reveals himself as God. It was fascinating, cos a lot of that's about being a warrior. There's all these myths we've created throughout time to have an understanding of weird, fundamental, primal things Some dialogue ended up getting in there from the investigations Simon Kinberg, Bryan Singer and I were doing. There's a line where Apocalypse says, am born of death." The idea that God and religion are born from the rituals around death. One of the things you see as man evolves is that burial sites became more complex, and those rituals and the ideas of God are linked. It's pretty dark for a comic book movie, but I really dug exploring that!

You've worked on Star Wars and this

- has either turned up in your dreams? Yeah, it all sticks around, rambling around in the unconsciousness. I had a dream that Harrison Ford had a back issue, and we were walking along and he noticed I was walking funny. Then he fixed my back by doing weird jump kicks off my shoulder and head!

That'd probably get him in trouble with the Health & Safety Executive.. Hev. I felt great afterwards though!

Watch out Jean Grey, there's a lorry behind you!

66 We wanted it to look and feel different from the other movies to be a unique experience





They struggled to get to grips with the giant, five-person hula-hoop.

MANIC

OLIVIA MUNN

on "nerding out" the day she got her Psylocke costume



Were you familiar with the character before you got the role?

Psylocke for a

long time. I'm one of five kids. We all grew up in Japan, on a military base. We'd pool our money together, and my little brother would buy the X-Men comics. So when simon kinderg told me they'd given me Psylocke, I started going, "Well, you know she's a twin. Are you going to talk about her being telekinetic and telepathic? He's like. "She was a twin?!"

Did you have clear ideas about how to play her?

At one point I sent a long email, where I was like, "I just want to make sure we're all on the same page about how to portray Psylocke." And it was so long it was like I was writing a historical background of a real person! I was like, "Erm, I totally get it if you guys don't want me in the movie anymore. If I've just proven that you've literally just cast a fan, and you don't feel safe anymore cos you think she's gonna nerd out on everybody every day!'

And did you nerd-out, or did you manage to control yourself?

My nerd-out phase happened trying on the suit. Up until the very end, the whole outfit was black. And I'd asked, "This is going to be purple, right?" But they were short on time cos my character was put in at the very end, right before filming. I felt it was very important the costume looks identical to the comic books. So I called Bryan Singer, and he's already read my email, so he knew it was coming from a fan. And he said okay. He 100% understood right away.



motivation is hopefully human and emotional. The thing that we spent the most time on in conceiving the movie was making sure that even though he's a larger-than-life villain there was still something emotionally grounded in him, and relatable."

Star Wars' Poe Dameron, Oscar Isaac, is the man playing god.

"He has a great philosophical way of looking at things," Singer says of his star, admiringly. "We both saw eye to eye on the character, equating it to leaders of cults. To me, Apocalypse is a god of the Old Testament, a vengeful god. When he came to be, men were beating each over the heads with rocks for a piece of meat, and he brought civilisation. He believes mankind owes him worship, and if he doesn't get it he'll swallow them up through the earth - and he can do it! But I think Apocalypse's greatest power is persuasion".

It's Apocalypse's silver tongue which enables him to recruit a mutant "Four Horsemen" to aid him in laying waste to our idolatry.

"When Oscar and I studied cults, what I got from that was that every cult has four elements," Singer explains, "There's a political element, so I chose Magneto; a military element, so I chose an angry character, Angel; the youth element for indoctrination - that's young Storm; then a sexual component y'know, most cult leaders sleep with half their congregations - that's Psylocke."

If anything demonstrates the force of Apocalypse's charisma, it's surely that Magneto is willing to bow the knee and do his bidding.

"That was challenging," Singer reveals, "his storyline - how he comes to a place where he's vulnerable for indoctrination by Apocalypse."

The solution: giving the embittered Erik Lehnsherr a family. In the comics, Magneto

RAVEN GOODBYE?

Could this be the last X-Men outing for **JENNIFER LAWRENCE?**



What kind of psychological place is Raven at when Apocalypse begins?

Raven's disillusioned about the her own. She's like a one-person army going around the world helping mutants in need. But she's not letting herself get close to anyone. Then she starts to bond with Nightcrawler. She saves him in the opening, then they're together for much of the movie. And she comes to connect with all the new kids, becoming a leader

In the comics she's Nightcrawler's mother, of course - is that something you touch upon?

It's not something we explore in this movie.

Is this an emotional film?

There's a lot of emotion in it - a lot of emotional closure for Raven's character. She reunites with Hank for the first time in a long time. And she reunites with Charles, and deals with a lot of unresolved conflict with him. His world view is more challenged by this film than any of the other movies, so there's emotional drama in that storyline

Is this your last X-Men film? You never say never. I love the family of these movies, the cast and crew. We all treated this movie as the end of a trilogy, but you never know.

'I want you to manifest your superpowers like this! Characters no 84 and 85... keeping up?

66 The thing we spent most time on was making sure there was still something grounded in Apocalypse 99





STARK CONTRAST **SOPHIE TURNER**

on switching from Game Of Thrones to X-Men



How did you approach playing the young Jean Grey? It's verv

exciting because we know where she ends up, and how amazing she becomes, and how powerful. So it was fun to play that down and have it as a troubled young girl struggling massively not just with her powers, but being a teenager and being accepted.

Was it intimidating to come into this cast?

Oh my god, I was petrified! But as soon as I got the part, Nick Hoult emailed me. "Congratulations! We're excited to have you." Then I came on set and everyone was just the nicest. What I thought was going to happen was the young ones would form our own group, and the older ones would be protective of the group that they have. But no, they welcomed us in with open arms.

This role must be much more physically demanding than Sansa Stark.

Definitely. I've been in and out of the gym constantly to get my fitness levels up and just look like I could do something. Despite the fact that she's telepathic and telekinetic, so I figure she can just sit and do nothing! I was like, "Can't she just be fat and eat a lot?" But apparently not..

married his wife Magda after rescuing her from Auschwitz; later she fled after he revealed his powers while failing to save their daughter from dying in a fire. In *Apocalypse* the two meet much later, but it sounds like the relationship is similarly doomed...

"He's living off the grid as a regular guy," Singer says. "He's gone to Poland. He's worked among humans in anonymity. Suddenly that's disrupted and he's forced to return to his old ways, but in a very different way - an almost apocalyptic and tragic way."

BACK TO THE COMICS

A grinning Professor X is thrusting away at Cyclops from behind, like an over-sexed Labrador. No. this isn't a radical reinterpretation of the character dynamics; Jean Grev doesn't have a rival for the young Scott Summers's affections - it's just James McAvoy horsing around in-between takes. As the set-up's being blocked for lighting purposes, it's actually a double bearing a strip of tape with "Scott" scrawled on it who's the unwitting recipient of a momentary Xavier air-humping, not newcomer Tye Sheridan.

SFX has teleported (okay, taken a minibus...) to a dusty, disused industrial facility - once, trains were repaired here - to observe Xavier, Scott and Jean hiding out from Apocalypse in a small, dingy room in Cairo. We see them crashing to the floor, rolling over, and looking round - rocked by an explosion, perhaps, or just transported here? Another moment sees Charles reacting to a voice booming his name Apocalypse? A third sees Scott robotically advancing on his comrades, as if under control... Over the course of several hours we only get a brief glimpse of Singer, who's present mostly as a god-like PA voice. We catch brief snatches floating on the wind: "Jean senses this... getting killed by Apocalypse". Inbetween the seemingly endless succession of takes, Game Of Thrones' Sophie Turner sits cross-legged on the floor, while McAvoy unfastens his wristwatch (digital, natch), spins it around on his finger, fastens it again, then repeats. Though these aren't key scenes, it's still a thrill to witness the advent of something X-fans have long anticipated: James McAvoy finally rocking a chrome dome!

"In each of the other films, we talked about it," Kinberg reveals. "There was a scene in First Class where he went bald. In one draft of Days Of Future Past he was balding over the span of the movie. It just never felt right, for whatever reason. Here, it's tied to something narratively, and also it was the end of this trilogy. So it felt like the right time."

It's also fascinating to see newcomers Sheridan and Turner in action as the young





Scott and Jean. It's a reminder that there's so much going on in Apocalypse. Not only does it introduce the most powerful threat our heroes have faced, and bring the curtain down on this trilogy, but it refreshes the franchise as First Class did, by bringing in new blood to play younger versions of iconic characters - not only Jean and Scott but also Storm (Alexandra Shipp) and Nightcrawler (Kodi Smit-McPhee). It all goes back to what Singer said earlier, about the influence of Age Of Apocalypse.

"Everybody's different from how they are as the older characters," he explains. "Cyclops, who's destined to become Xavier's right-hand man, is this total ne'er-do-well, a complete fuck-up in school. Jean Grey is this young girl who has no idea what's growing inside her, this tremendous power that she doesn't even understand. And young Storm... wow, she's a villain! So you get to see our heroes from X-Men X-Men: Apocalypse opens on 19 May.

1-3 as completely different characters. I think that's going to be really fun for an audience."

It's a recurring theme in our conversation with the director. This may be the ninth X-Men movie (counting Deadpool!), but Singer insists that it'll feel fresh, and suggests he's achieved that by going back to the well with the comics.

"I'm trying to bring things we haven't seen before. All different kinds of things. Ways to shoot Cerebro we haven't seen before. The looks of characters, and them doing things they haven't done before in movies. So I look to the comics. This is... how many X-Men movies have I been involved in?"

So many that he has to start counting aloud. "One, two, three... With First Class I wrote the story, so yeah, it's five. So for me, I can't do the same things!"

MOLECULAR MAGIC

Star Wars legend JOHN DYKSTRA is the man in charge of visual effects



Apocalypse can manipulate inanimate objects - how are you visualising that? Part of the fun of this movie is to see the details

of things. So rather than just see a building falling down there's an opportunity to explore what happens internally at a molecular level Bullet Time is a good example of that kind of thinking. His power has to manifest something that's not particularly visible. If you were doing a guy whose power was throwing lightning, easy - we all know

what lightning is. When it comes to desublimation, which is a solid going into a gaseous form directly or a gas turning into a solid directly, there's no identifying visual. But people need to feel that there's some physics behind it, in terms of the way things move, conservation of mass.. You allow a little magic as long as there's a dose of reality with it.

What's the balance between physical effects and CGI?

We've tried to create as many things as we can practically. The tendency towards computers is empowering and at the same time limiting. There's serendipity that happens when you do real things. When I began doing visual effects you had to figure out how to physically make an object do something that was recorded on film. With a computer you don't have that limitation anymore. But you also don't have the process involved with the creation of the final image, and that process is informative and in some cases really valuable. In a weird way it's like the difference between a handwritten letter

BEYOND APOCALYPSE

Five fearsome X-Foes waiting for Hollywood to call...

SAURON

An energy vampire in the form of a humanoid pteranodon - oh, the cool points - Sauron lurks in the hidden prehistoric

kingdom known as the Savage Land. Hypno-eyes, or-claws, fire-breath... and the power to absorb the lifeforce of mutants!

THE SHADOW KING



The first evil mutant Charles Xavier ever encountered - and the primal threat that convinced him to form the X-Men. He's an ancient entity of pure psychic energy, unleashed upon the astral plane by mankind's first nightmare.

MUTANT X



Also known as Proteus, the insane son of Moira MacTaggert is one of the deadliest, most powerful mutants in the

Marvel canon. Gifted with the psionic ability to reshape reality to his will, he can also possess host bodies.

ONSLAUGHT

Nothing less than the amalgamation of the dark sides of the psyches of Professor X and Magneto. The Big Bad of an epic 1996 storyline, this Jungian horror was only toppled by the combined might of the Marvel Universe.

CASSANDRA NOVA



Spawned from the imagination of high-concept king Grant Morrison.

Cassandra's the unborn twin of Charles Xavier, killed by her brother in a psychic battle in the womb. Now a disembodied psychic entity she has all of Charles's power, none of his scruples. Nick Setchfield



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SCARLETT JOHANSSON

The Widow bites back... and this time it's war

Photography by Maarten de Boer

eam Steve? Team Tony? Don't be so binary, people. Here at SFX we know the truly smart money's on Team Natasha. "I really can't think of any other opportunity where I would have the chance to grow with the character as I have," says Scarlett Johannson, returning for a fifth turn as the lethal Black Widow in Captain America: Civil War. A luminous, compelling screen presence with the talent and bankability to topline blockbusters and art films alike, Johansson's emerged as the female cornerstone of the Marvel Cinematic Universe since she first unleashed the Widow's stingers in Iron Man 2. It's a role she clearly relishes. "She has a greater calling and I think that's what makes this character really heroic. She dug her heels in and did not go down the road that would be personally more desirable, to disappear and live off the map and have what everybody wants. In this film we really see her move closer to a leadership position."

How does Natasha choose a side in this conflict?

Natasha doesn't take things personally and isn't really about taking sides per se. I don't think she really sees things quite so black and white. She likes to live in that grey area. While it's painful on one hand, she's gone in a different direction and is being strategic about her choices. She sees that Steve's taking things personally and she knows the danger of that. Initially she goes with the path of least resistance but she starts to see how it becomes this deep, personal friction between both sides. She realises that she has to take a different strategy but I don't think that she ever assumes that Steve will come over to her way of thinking. What's Natasha's relationship with Tony Stark?

Natasha is a bit torn in her relationship with Tony. I think she really sees Tony very clearly and sees his weaknesses as being a danger for the team. That kind of hazard that we've seen in the past films is very real and involves a lot of casualties. Tony is very emotional and that's scary for Natasha, especially when you're talking about the number of lives that are at stake and these huge, life-changing decisions this team is responsible for making. I think Tony is really a lost cause for Natasha. I don't think that they

really have a relationship where she can reason with him. I don't know if anybody can. She sees Tony as an obstacle that really needs to be dealt with accordingly.

How was it shooting the big fight scene?

1 It was pretty surreal having that face-off with everybody. There have been a few moments in these films where you look around and realise you're in good company. You've got your costume on and you're ready to kick some booty. I remember doing the first Avengers and all of us getting together in the circle and having our hero moment and again in Avengers 2. This scene felt like that kind of epic moment where you know this is really big.

This movie introduces us to the Black Panther. How has it been working with Chadwick Boseman?

DI've gotten to do a couple of scenes with Chadwick, and they've been great. He's such a soulful actor and so professional, so present. He really gives so much to the other person. As the universe grows and expands, Marvel is so consistent at cherry-picking such fine actors to bring onto the team. He's added to this group immensely.

You have a new costume this time around...

This time around we gave her a sleeker uniform look. It's a little bit closer to the actual comics, which I think the fans will like. There's something about it that's kind of basic and I like that. But I don't really wear my suit that much in this movie. I'm more in my regular civilian clothing.

Do you enjoy the more grounded aspect of Natasha?

o I think that it's just a different experience. I like what comes with the civilian look. It's a lot of hand-to-hand combat and some gunplay, which is always cool. It's kind of like a hyper-realistic form of fighting with the suit on. It looks different. It's a different feeling. But no matter what makes these movies work, whether I'm in the suit or in the civilian clothes, whether it's Natasha or Black Widow, the idea is that these characters can still maintain the dynamics of their relationships with all the other characters and it's sort of seamless.

What will audiences connect to in Civil War?

I think that the conflict between both sides is what will start the conversation amongst fans and audience members. When they leave the theatre, they can hopefully still argue for either side. It will give them something to take home!

Captain America: Civil War opens on 29 April.

Biodata 😃

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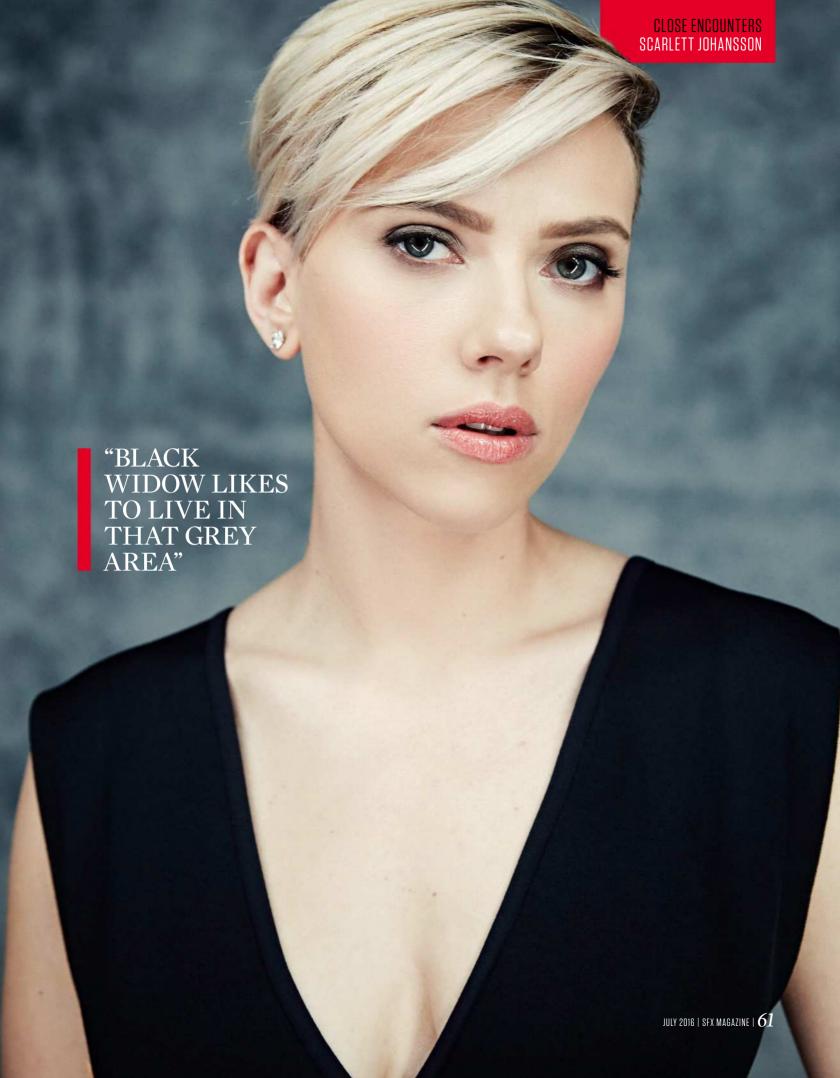
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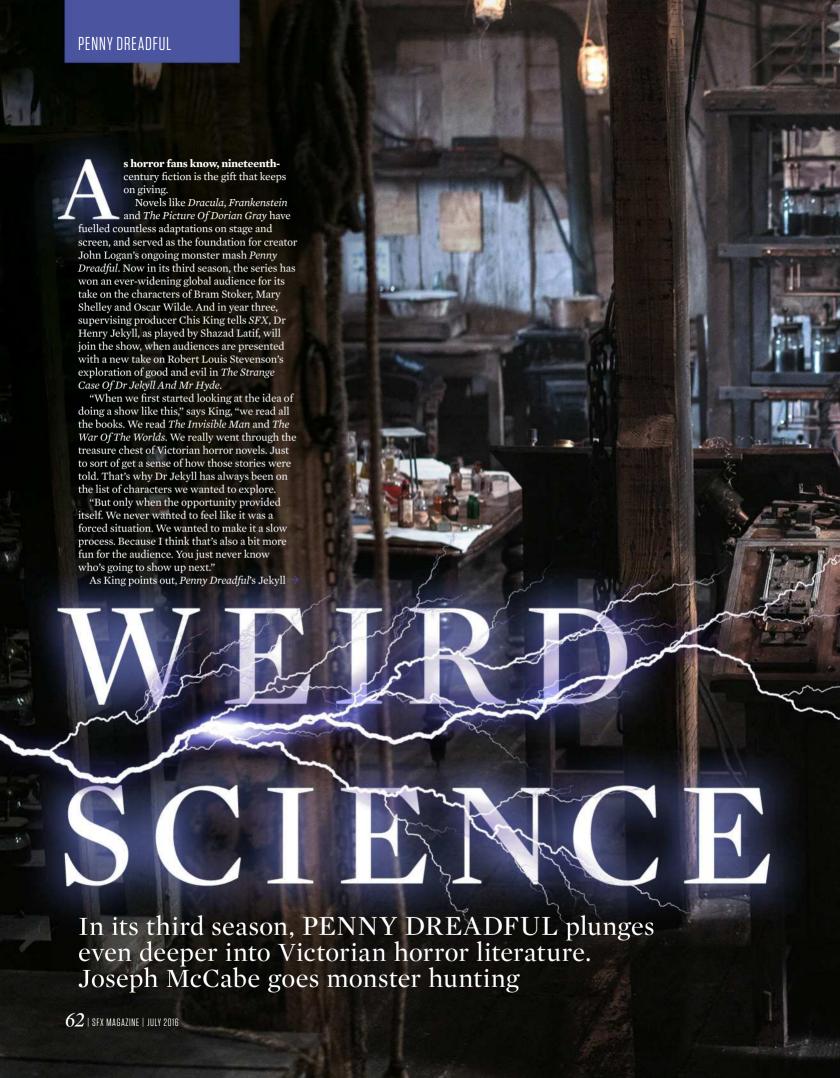
→ The Prestige Lost In Translation, **Avengers** Assemble, Under The Skin, Lucy

Random fact

→ The late David Bowie supplied backing vocals for Scarlett's 2008 album Anywhere I Lay My Head.

CONTOUR BY GETTY







will differ in at least one key respect from the doomed scientist of Victorian literature...

"We still try to be true to the novel, to the character, but John wanted to make him stand out and wanted to give context for what drove him to want to work with chemicals to change who he was. What's interesting is we play with race here, because the character is of Indian descent. And being a man of colour in London 1892 was a tough call. We get a sense of Dr Jekyll feeling like an outsider. Just like all of our other characters on the show. But he's truly an outsider. He doesn't belong and no one wants him there. So it's an interesting dynamic as to why he's pursuing things to make him different or make him better or change who he is.'

Jekyll will also share a history with Penny Dreadful's Dr Victor Frankenstein.

"We play with the idea that Dr Jekyll was a student at the same time as Dr Frankenstein, so they have a history together as two young students growing up in the medical field. It was a fun way of bringing these characters together. But it created a whole new dynamic for both our Dr Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll."

Where goes Jekyll, so goes his monstrous alter ego. So should horror fans begin looking forward to a smackdown between Mr Hyde and Frankenstein's creation?

"I can't reveal all our secrets!" laughs the producer.

ENTER DR SEWARD

In addition to Jekyll, season three will introduce another physician pulled from the pages of Victoriana - Bram Stoker's Dr Seward; played (in a bit of gender reversal) by veteran actress Patti LuPone. As therapist to Eva Green's Vanessa Ives, Seward is tasked with overseeing the enigmatic medium's mental reconstruction in the wake of season two's harrowing events.

"We saw at the end of season two when she dropped her cross into the fire it showed that she felt abandoned by everybody, including her god," says King of Ives. "The one person that she had all the faith in. So she's faithless at the beginning of this season. She's alone. Sir Malcolm's off in Africa burying bodies, Ethan has been taken prisoner and is on his way to the Americas. She just feels utterly alone and lost. She's a completely shattered person from the Vanessa that we've known. This sort of strong, powerful, very well put together woman changes into a broken child.

"The thing about Dr Seward is she's trying desperately to help Vanessa, but she's a woman of science. So the idea of the supernatural and the occult are things that for her aren't necessarily grounded in reality. But eventually she comes around to understanding who Vanessa is, and who is behind all of the darkness inside of her."



66 There's so many fascinating characters from the time period that we can slowly reveal 99



LuPone appeared in season two of *Penny* Dreadful as the now deceased witch Joan Clayton (aka the Cut-Wife). But, adds King, "when the idea of creating someone who helped Vanessa came up, John said, 'I have to have Patti back.' It's revealed throughout the season that perhaps she has some sort of blood relation with Joan Clayton, with the Cut-Wife, so you'll come to understand why the same actor is playing two different roles."

GOING NATIVE

As for Ives' other ally, Ethan (Josh Hartnett), in season three the werewolf adventurer serves as a means of introducing yet another culture to Penny Dreadful - that of Native Americans.

"While the empire was taking over Africa and India and wiping out cultures, in America it was taking out the Native Americans. What happened to those cultures that were killed or forced on to reservations with their land taken away from them... Yeah, we do play on that this season, with a character played by Wes Studi. His name is Kaetenay, and he has a very troubled history with Ethan's character. We learn a lot about what happened at the time with Sitting Bull and all these horrible things that took place with all the various tribes in America. It's an interesting world to explore, and to compare that with what was taking place in the UK. There are some interesting stories in the Native American culture and we've been able to pull some of those out and be influenced by some of those as well."

Despite the horror in which it's shrouded, King believes that a large part of *Penny* Dreadful's appeal lies in its exploration of family and the ties that bind people together.

"Season one was all about bringing this family together - a very dysfunctional, dark and twisted family, but a family nonetheless. Then by season two, at the very end, we saw that family ripped apart. They're all separated and scattered across the world. This season is about them understanding how much they need each other. And it's all about realising what their destinies are. That leads us to season four, understanding a bit more about them and then going off and battling more dark and sinister elements."

Is there any literary character who's not yet appeared on Penny Dreadful that King would like to see in future seasons?

"There's so many other really fascinating characters from that time period that we can slowly reveal and explore. I've always loved the Dr Moreau story [The Island Of Dr Moreau]. I think there's something fascinating there as well... But time will tell. We only have eight to ten episodes per season to try to tell these stories, and we're gonna take our time." •

Penny Dreadful returns to Sky Atlantic in May.



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New Dawn, New Justice

Forget the New 52... DC REBIRTH is all about legacy. Stephen Jewell explains what to expect from next month's major comic book relaunch



IN WITH THE OLD AND THE NEW

Yes, the DC Universe is undergoing one of its regular reboots with *DC Rebirth*. Designed to appeal equally to newcomers and long-term fans alike, "the whole point of *DC Rebirth*," in the words of DC's Chief Creative Officer Geoff Johns, is "to get back to the essence of the characters."

NEW BAT

Joined by artist David Finch, Tom King succeeds Scott Snyder on *Batman*. A former espionage officer-turned comics writer, the former *Grayson* scribe will draw on his experiences working for the CIA as he explores what makes the non-superpowered Batman such a formidable superhero – and his delicate balancing act of getting "as close to the horror without becoming the horror". And while he won't be penning any of the now twice-monthly main Bat-books, Scott Snyder hasn't forsaken the Caped Crusader, as he launches *All-Star Batman*, which will see him joined by a revolving team of top artists including Jock, Tula Lotay and, initially, John Romita Jr.

SUPER FAMILIES

With both Pete Tomasi and Patrick Gleason's Superman and Dan Jurgens and Patrick Zircher's Action Comics focusing on the pre-New 52 Superman, the Man of Steel discovers the joys and downsides of married life as he and wife Lois Lane's attempts to raise their super-son Jon Kent are interrupted by the likes of Doomsday and Lex Luthor.

Meanwhile Gene Luen Yang and Victor Bogdanovic's New Super-Man – yes, that hyphen is meant to be there – is the most intriguing of DC's new Super-books. Setting out to "take what Superman represents and explore it in Chinese

culture," it introduces Kenji Kong, a 17-year-old from Shanghai, who is mysteriously imbued with some of Superman's actual powers.

WONDER YEARS

She upstaged both the Big Blue and the Dark Knight in their own film this year, so DC are hoping that *DC Rebirth* will finally elevate Wonder Woman to the exulted position that she deserves ahead of her own solo film next summer. And while there is disappointment that a female writer like *DC Bombshells*' Marguerite Bennett didn't land the gig, the return of old hand Greg Rucka has been greeted positively. Charged with rebuilding her sacred mission after "an unimaginable loss", Rucka is paired with Liam Sharp on Diana Prince's present-day exploits; while Nicola Scott illustrates an alternating, *Year One*-esque story set 10 years ago during her early days as the Earth's protector.

DIRTY DOZEN

* * * *

DC's artistic talents don't come more stellar than Jim Lee, so it's "quite a big deal" – to quote series writer Rob Williams – that he, along with Philip Tan, is drawing *Suicide Squad*. With a line-up reportedly similar to the upcoming movie, it will be published in August to coincide with the David Ayer-directed cinematic extravaganza.

NO FLASH IN THE PAN

DC is also planning to restore the fortunes of Aquaman and the Flash (hardly perennial bestsellers) with their own movie outings waiting in the wings. Helmed by Dan Abnett and Brad Walker, *Aquaman* sees Atlantis trying to play a more prominent role in global affairs, while Joshua





Cyborg faces Some old favourites are changing more than others

Crisis

From Infinite Earths to The New 52: a history of DC reboots.

🖈 Designed to simplify DC's convoluted continuity by eliminating many of its endless alternate dimensions, creators have been undoing and redoing Marv Wolfman and George Perez's handiwork ever since Crisis On Infinite Earths was first published in 1985. Indeed many of its other timelines were subsequently restored in its two sequels, 2006's Infinite Crisis and 2008's Final Crisis, the latter of which was penned by Grant Morrison, whose 2014 onus The Multiversity celebrated DC's multiverse in all its wondrous, oddball glory.

In contrast, 2011's Flashpoint once again radically streamlined the DC Universe, paving the way for The New 52 in September of the same year. which controversially saw DC's entire publishing line start all over again with 52 brand new first issues. Yet only four years later, many previously redundant versions of characters from the pre-Flashpoint era returned in Convergence, a two-month long crossover, which in turn gave way to Divergence last June and saw the official retiring of the New 52 branding, although its continuity has continued, at least until DC Rebirth arrives.



Neverending | 66 Green Lanterns is pitched as 'Lethal Weapon with alien technology'

Williamson, Carmine Di Giandomenico and Neil Googe deal with a mass outbreak of super-speedsters in The Flash.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Best known for animated series like Static Shock, John Semple will make his comics debut on Cyborg alongside veteran artists Will Conrad and Paul Pelletier, as Vic Stone is confronted by a new cybernetic adversary in the shape of the Singularity. * * * *

GOING GREEN

While the Green Lantern Corps movie isn't due until 2020, the Emerald Knights flagship title is set for a shake-up thanks to Sam Humphries. Having recently scripted Star-Lord for Marvel, he will presumably bring a Guardians Of The Galaxy-style vibe to DC's intergalactic police force. Pitched as "Lethal Weapon with alien technology", it sees Hal Jordan missing in space, leaving rookies Jessica Cruz and Simon Baz to defend the Earth.

WITH A HITCH

* * * *

Having written and drawn the recent JLA, Bryan Hitch will be scripting July's latest iteration of DC's premiere super-group, for artists Tony Daniel and Fernando Pasarin. It's set to unite the usual heavy-hitters against a cataclysmic event dubbed "The Awakening".

CON JOB IS BACK

While John Constantine's 2013 move from Vertigo's mature imprint to the main DC line wasn't met with universal acclaim, the news that South London's Simon Oliver is penning August's The Hellblazer should restore the occult detective's irascible, chain-smoking charm.

BRAND NEW AUDIO ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE



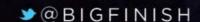
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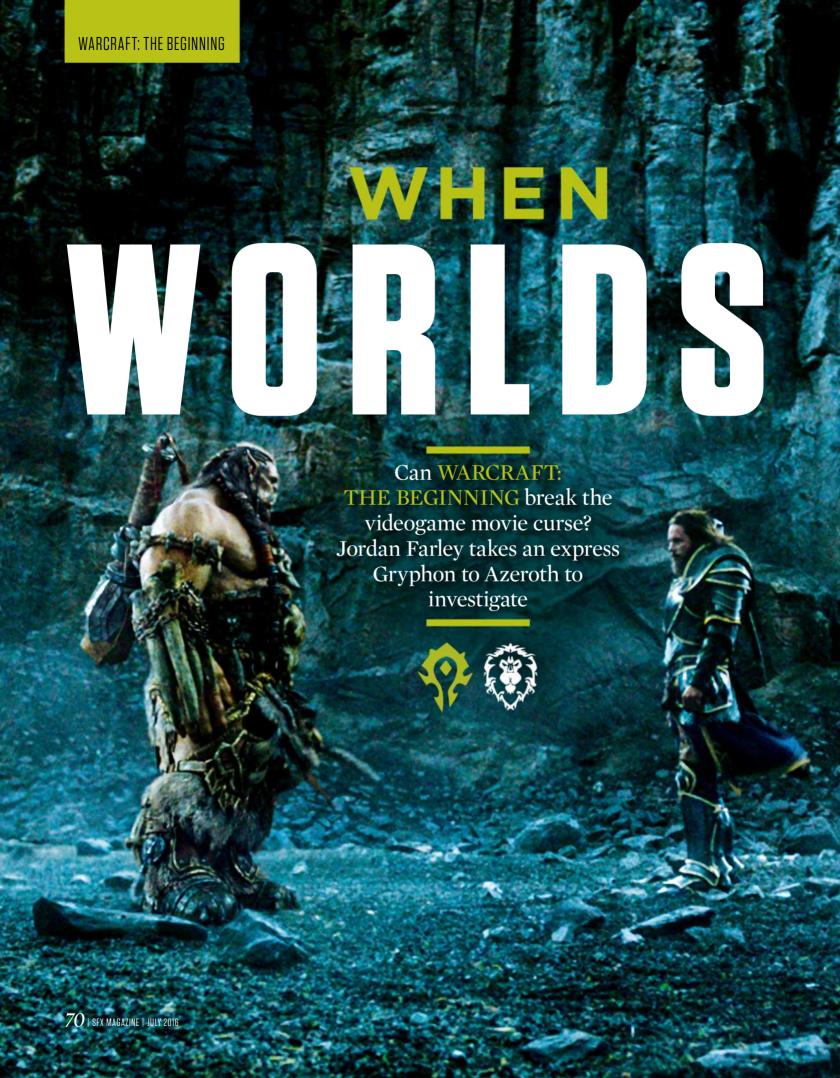
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FOR THE ALLIANCE!

DOMINIC COOPER takes the throne

Who is King Llane?

From my perspective he's a good man and he's good to his people. He's not an aggressor. He's trying to do things as best he can with as little damage as possible. He doesn't know which way to turn, and it seems that the more reliable route to take is the more trusting one, but it's actually a big mistake

Do you feel a responsibility to do right

It became very apparent when we had the guys who created this game come down... to see them respond to what they're seeing, to see someone's dream and vision come to life like that was quite incredible. But it also made us realise how important it is for us, as characters within the world, to get

Have you played the games?

It's one of those things you've heard about, but I never played it. The film stands up on its own as a script. Even though we devote a lot of time to making it accessible to people who have been playing it for that long, it also needs to appeal to people who have no idea what it is.

How did you cope with Warcraft's enormous armour?

The armour is tough. And horse riding. Doing the horse stunts with the armour. But I've got to say, I've never seen costumes like it, they're absolutely magnificent. And the weaponry. Of course, because it's Warcraft, weaponry is 20 times bigger than what you'd normally have to be dealing with, so everything is just enhanced.



story is a battle between good and evil, but in the world of Warcraft nothing is ever that simple. The decade-in-themaking adaptation of

t the heart of every fantasy

Blizzard's phenomenally popular videogame series pits hulking Orcs against an alliance of humans. Dwarves and high Elves. So far, so

Tolkien. But unlike the foul minions of Mordor, Warcraft's toothsome terrors are every bit as noble as the mortal men they're destined to battle.

"It was important for Duncan [Jones] - and all of us - that it wasn't a fantasy movie about good and evil, because that just doesn't ring true with Warcraft," producer Stuart Fenegan tells SFX on the film's Toronto set. "There's good and evil on both sides, and I think that's much more true of the real world."

Witnessing the war from both perspectives has been integral to the series since its inception in 1994 with Warcraft: Orcs And Humans, the story of which forms the basis of Warcraft: The Beginning. But this wasn't always the case. When Warcraft was first announced in 2006 Sam Raimi was set to direct a script from Thor: The Dark World scribe Robert Rodat which, according to producer Charles Roven, told a "one-sided" narrative from the human perspective. After years in development hell, Raimi departed to direct Oz: The Great And Powerful, leaving the door open for Moon director Duncan Jones to step in.

"After Moon, we knew we weren't quite at the place where that shot was going to be available to us, and Mr Raimi was still attached," Fenegan recalls. "But you keep making those exploratory phone calls and keep banging on the door. It's really fortunate when there's that combination of a project that everybody really believes in, and an opportunity for people that are really passionate about the original material to come in and make something special with it."

Passion for Warcraft is not in short supply as far as Duncan Jones is concerned. The Source Code director is an avid gamer and has been immersed in the series since the mid-'90s. "Duncan and I were both hugely into the original RTS games," Fenegan says with a smile. "We both did the same thing of lugging our computers around to other people's houses in the back of our cars, in order to play them on a closed network - that's commitment to multiplayer gaming! And then when World Of Warcraft came out in 2005 we both started playing it together, right until Burning Crusade came out. I stopped at that point because my wife threatened to divorce me."

Such tales are not uncommon on the set of Warcraft: The Beginning. Orc actor Rob Kazinsky is a huge fan of the series, having racked up well over a thousand hours in World Of Warcraft, while visual effects supervisor Bill Westenhofer got the job after answering the question "What do you know about Warcraft?" with "I have a level 90 mage. I have a level 90





66 We've worked hard to include the flavour and tone that players are familiar with 🤧

warrior. I have a level 90 hunter..." And with developers Blizzard involved at every stage of the production one thing's for certain - Warcraft: The Beginning will be the most faithful videogame adaptation to date.

"We've all worked really hard to include as much of that flavour and tone of the world that players are familiar with," says Fenegan. "But also making sure that it's distinct in its own right. I think there's a fine balance because, within the game, physics goes out of the window; you've got swords that are seven feet long and three feet wide, and that would be very hard to pull off. But Duncan and Gavin Bocquet, our production designer, have done a great job of delivering that familiarity for the core fans without it ever feeling cartoony."

During SFX's tour around the film's colossal

Toronto set, which features towering libraries, 18ft golems and a state of the art performance capture studio with a bank of computers that resembles Nasa mission control, we're taken to the inner sanctum of Stormwind Keep - the human stronghold where King Llane (Dominic Cooper) is discussing a course of action with his champion Anduin Lothar (Travis Fimmel) and powerful mage Medivh (Ben Foster). At one end lies a long table where Llane and company argue over troop movements, while at the other there's a small armoury, where lion-emblazoned armour and ornate weaponry (all created by Weta) lie in ceiling-high piles.

MAKING IT REAL

"Our brief was to turn their rather playful world that's a bit whimsical, a bit Disneyland, into something that has a bit of integrity to it," Bocquet explains. "We treated it as real but used the game as an influence. Even though this set doesn't exist in the game, when [Warcraft creator] Chris Metzen came in he felt immediately that it was like a Stormwind castle environment. So he says he's going to have a war room in the game!"

Unsurprisingly given its title, Warcraft: The Beginning goes back to square one and tells the story of the first meeting between Orcs and





FOR THE

TOBY KEBBELL goes green

Who is Durotan?

I'm the chief of the Frostwolf Clan. Our world isn't living as well as it was. I take my pregnant, expecting wife to find a new homeland because there's nothing to hunt, there's nothing to eat. Gul'dan, he's all in on this fel magic, saying "this is what we all have to do, this is how we'll all survive". I'm

How did you learn to play an Orc? Was it difficult?

As an actor your process is to find the voice and to find a walk. The Orc walk was brought to us by Terry Notary, who set us through a short period of school. It's like, you tie a tie around your waist, and you let it drag between your legs to keep your centre of gravity low. The voice came when they showed us the animation of Robert Kazinsky as an Orc. We were both like, "So we have to overact?" [laughs]

What are the biggest challenges of playing a motion capture character in films like this?

PIt's much more than motion capture now. It is a performance. If that performance isn't there, they can't do anything with it. You have to stay alive because once the model goes dead, there's nothing.

Did you have to learn Orcish?

We have moments of Orc language. There are moments where me and [Garona] are having a conversation and she's a translator. But we haven't been studying Orcish. We actually haven't shot it yet, so it's not clear what we're going to do. But definitely, we are from two different worlds.



humans. With Draenor, the orc world, dying Frostwolf Clan chieftan Durotan (Toby Kebbell) and his second in command Orgrim Doomhammer (Rob Kazinsky) throw in with Orc warlock Gul'dan (Daniel Wu) in a last-ditch effort to save their people by opening a portal to another world. The catch? That world - Azeroth - is already inhabited by humans. Further complicating matters is Garona (Paula Patton), a half-human Orc who falls for Lothar. But with sound ideological reasons on both sides, is war being precipitated by rotten apples in their ranks?

"The biggest thing that we've done is create a film that's going to have you engaged by being really invested in both sides of the story," says Roven. "You've got the Orcs, and they're a warring species - so they're an irresistible force, right? And you've got Azeroth, and they're kind of the immovable object. But what we haven't seen before is the fact you're actually going to be very invested in both. The other thing that's really going to be amazing to watch is how real these motion-capture characters are. It's easy enough to watch and be compelled by a human actor playing a human role. But to have that same ability to be invested in a completely created, virtual character, it's really a thrilling experience."

Those entirely CG Orcs are set to be the most technically accomplished performance capture creatures yet, and rightly so because if the big green men don't work, neither does the

"It was important to all of us that the Orc characters really delivered," Fenegan says. "Audiences are so educated now, the only way to do that was digitally. We didn't want to shoot it the way that Avatar shot, where everything was grey-stage and people in mo-cap suits. It was important for Duncan to shoot as much of the film in-camera as possible. So we have this interesting hybrid which has never been done

before of beautiful, huge live-action sets with fully costumed human characters, interacting with large numbers of mo-cap characters."

GAME OVER

With videogame adaptations typically ranging from whiffy to eye-wateringly pungent, what makes Warcraft different? "I think it's too easy to lump an entire genre - like videogames - and say you can't make a good film out of a videogame," Roven asserts. "I just reject that idea. I think it's difficult to make a good film. Period. I can't speak about other videogames because making a film out of Grand Theft Auto or Assassin's Creed is a different exercise than making a film out of Warcraft. So you have to look at what the specifics of the underlying potential narrative structure is on these things. We really feel like this particular story is going to be successful."

"It's not about adapting a videogame," Fenegan adds, "it's about trying to make a great movie with a great script from a world that you're passionate about. It sounds like a pun, but the world in Warcraft is as much a character as any of the characters within that huge 20-year canon of stories and characters. It's a world that's familiar to every player."

Despite those 20 years of stories, and the clear respect the filmmakers have for the series, crucially Jones was aware he could never be reverential to the detriment of a cinematic experience. "The most important thing for us is the fact we've got this team of filmmakers who don't know anything about the game balanced out by people who know it intimately and have spent years of their life playing it," Fenegan explains. "It's a question of making sure that story comes first and you're not slavishly following things, but you're keeping true to the spirit of the game." •





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HEROES INSPIRATIONS

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

The indie icon shares the pleasures and passions of his past with Joseph McCabe...

Portrait by Maarten de Boer

he world of Robert Rodriguez encompasses all kinds of genres, from the science fiction, horror and fantasy of Planet Terror, The Faculty and From Dust Till Dawn to the Western, espionage and film noir of Desperado, Spy Kids and Sin City. But the long, tall Texas-born filmmaker's maverick spirit and often outrageous aesthetic weren't created in a vacuum. They were forged from a steady diet of classic cinema, comic books and cartoons, as Rodriguez makes clear to SFX when he sits down to talk Heroes & Inspirations...

JOHN CARPENTER

● Escape From New York and a lot of the John Carpenter movies influenced me. Right away, when I was younger, I saw this guy who was having way too much fun making movies. But not just directing them – writing them, scoring them, wearing multiple hats, and doing it independently. And I thought, "Wow, this guy's figured something out." I was really inspired by that to go try and make films. That was a direct inspiration for a lot of the things I did.

INDEPENDENT FILM

② Additionally, Sam Raimi and other guys who were doing it independently and doing it really creatively on their own terms, that really inspired somebody like me, who didn't grow up in Hollywood. I lived in Texas. Also, George Miller with Mad Max and Road Warrior, coming from Australia and making these independent films, that really had a different

language, really inspired me to go make stuff. I enjoyed other films as a moviegoer. But the ones who actually made me feel like I could go be a filmmaker too were those guys.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

DI grew up with a lot of classic cinema, because my mom used to take us - I'm from a big family with ten kids - to this revival theatre where they would play double features. Anything from MGM musicals to Hitchcock films. She liked that stuff better than the current crop of movies that were out at the time. So we would go see those. I remember seeing a double feature of Rebecca and Spellbound, and seeing the Salvador Dali dream sequence in Spellbound really freaked me out. I thought it was amazing, and it stuck in my head for a long time. I didn't see it again until many years later when it was finally released on video. There was no video back then. So I remember being eight or nine when I saw that and that being really powerful. Hitchcock was definitely an influence early on. He really made me see movies in a different way.

MICHAEL MANN

I remember liking shows like *Starsky And Hutch* that Michael Mann became a writer on. And seeing things like *Miami Vice* later, which was the first real attempt to bring a cinematic \Rightarrow

66 Alfred Hitchcock really made me see movies in a different way 99





quality to television that rivalled things that you would see at the movie theatre. That was pretty cool. That was a fun time growing up, seeing that happen to television, when it finally started being less like TV and more like movies.

JAWS

It came out on my birthday when I was seven, and that was my birthday present. I wanted to go see Jaws. I remember it feeling like a true horror film, because when I was a kid I hadn't seen anything that horrific ever. But a few years later I went to a drive-in and I saw Alien [laughs]...

BLACK-AND-WHITE COMIC BOOKS

DI think the first comic book I bought was Savage Sword Of Conan. It was a black-andwhite, larger-sized comic. It was magazinesized. It had John Buscema art and a Roy Thomas script. Great art in black-and-white, so you could really see the art. I really didn't care for colour comics since that was the first thing I saw. I really enjoyed the black-and-white. There was a lot of line, it felt like more of an artist's medium. I collected those. That's what got me into Robert E Howard. The first one I bought I saw at a magazine stand - I was probably ten or 11 - and then I got a subscription. I just couldn't wait for those to

66 Jonny Quest just happens to have a kid in it, but it's a true adventure film "



come every month. I absolutely loved those. I was already into Frazetta and fantasy art. Those were the main books I got. I think the only comic I collected that rabidly after that was Sin City - another black-and-white book! I've been getting the black-and-white editions of a lot of the graphic novels that come out. Especially now that everything's coloured in a computer...

FRANK FRAZETTA

He's the most influential illustrator by far for everybody who works in genre. He created images never seen before, before everyone else, and they were all out of his imagination! He didn't use models or swipes. And he created things that felt like cinema. You would look at them and imagine whole stories that went with them. It was very powerful. So to get to know him was just one of the highlights of my life. Now I can turn other people onto his art, now that I can make a film based on his work. It's based on a film he did in the '80s called Fire And Ice. It's gonna be Frank Frazetta's Fire And Ice. It's gonna be like walking into one of his paintings and just seeing it come to life. Frank's was the first art I ever had up on my walls as a teenager. And now I can walk down to the gallery that I have set up for his work and see the same ones that I had cut out of his art book and put up on my wall, but they're the originals now! It's pretty cool.

JONNY QUEST

I did like that cartoon a lot. It felt like nothing else you could see when you were a kid watching Saturday morning cartoons. It was even very different for Hanna-Barbera. That's why it didn't last but one season, because they couldn't keep up with the drawing style that the artist who created it demanded! He wanted it to be a real adventure show. He saw the



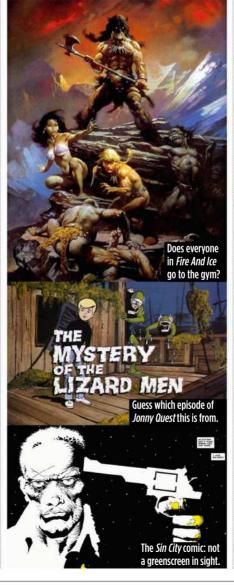
quality go down when the season progressed [laughs]. Because it was just hard. It was like three times as much drawing as they would do when they were drawing normal cartoon characters. This was like a pre-Raiders Of The Lost Ark, James Bond-style adventure show that just happened to have a kid in it, with a ton of action - and death. People would die! It was crazy. So I would watch that; and then when I had kids I showed it to my kids and they loved it. When they first approached me to do Jonny Quest as a film, I was doing my own series - the Spy Kids series. So I said, "No, I'm already doing my own series and I own it and I control it." Now that time has passed and the Spy Kids series is over, I still really loved that property and I really wanted to make a true adventure film for kids. It just happens to have a kid in it, but it's a true adventure film. Very true to the original.

ROBERT E HOWARD

• He was my favourite author when I was growing up. He was from Texas. In fact we were very inspired by his stuff for the second season of *From Dusk Till Dawn: The Series*. We had a character who was loosely based on Robert E Howard. We were very inspired by the pulp novels for season two... I have a house right there in the area he saw when he had climbed up on a rock and looked over and said, "That's Cimmeria down there!" So right where I live is where he imagined Cimmeria would be, where Conan is from. So I live in the land of Conan basically [laughs].

SIN CITY

• I loved that particular style of black-andwhite, where it was almost like a very high-contrast film noir look. I'd seen some other artists – one who was a friend of mine, who actually became a big artist later, Chris



66 I got sucked in by Frank Miller's amazing stories and characters 99

Ware. He had a comic called Floyd Farland, Citizen Of The Future. That was a pre-Sin City comic, but it had that sort of high-contrast look. It was kind of a Blade Runner type story. It ran in our local college paper, and I was a big fan of that. When I saw Sin City, that was like the ultimate statement of that film noir look, and of black-and-white. I picked it up right away because I liked the style. But then of course I got sucked in by Frank Miller's amazing stories and characters. I would buy it and re-buy it and have so many copies of it, since I saw it in 1992. Over ten years I had that book, before it finally dawned on me that I should make it into a movie. That coincided with me doing green-screen work with Spy Kids 3, so I thought it would be possible. I wouldn't have even attempted it before. But it finally all clicked together and I realised the time was right to try to bring something like that to life... I was very much drawn to his books and his stories and his characters and the sprawling epic that he had laid out. But I had wanted to do a film noir film for years and years, having seen all those black-and-white classics in the theatre when I was a kid. But it felt like it would be too nostalgic; and what I loved about Frank's work was that it was more of a post-modern spin on the film noir, so that it felt really very current and exciting. I thought, "That's what you need to do. You need to make a classic film noir story but in a very modern way." •



JOE HILL

How the American horror author fought back from tough times

Words by Jonathan Wright /// Photography by Kevin Nixon -

t may be a book about the world as we know it going up in flames following a pandemic, but Joe Hill says he had "a blast" writing *The Fireman*. "I do think if I wasn't a writer I would probably have burns all over my arms, and I'd be in jail for arson, and I'd wet myself anytime anyone lit a cigarette because I'd get so excited," he says. "All my books have a lot of burning in them."

Relax, he's laughing. Indeed, when *SFX* catches up with Hill over tea and cronuts – croissant-doughnut pastries, as indulgent as they sound – in Covent Garden, he's positively chipper. Some of this good humour, it appears, is down to spending time with Harper and John, the heroes of *The Fireman*, a novel that imagines humanity being infected with Dragonscale, a spore that looks like a beautiful tattoo on the skin, but which causes people to die of spontaneous combustion should they come under stress. "They're both very cheerful, brave souls," he says of his central characters.

They're also, metaphorically, zombies, infected themselves with Dragonscale. It's a way for Hill to explore "how we hate the sick, how we as humans despise the sick because they could infect us, and we're just totally freaked out by illness". At least in part, think of the novel as a kind of sly riposte to *The Walking Dead*, and the way the series and comic play on one of our darker urges.

"The Walking Dead speaks to an animal desire to massacre, to commit savagery on a daily, broad level and to be honoured for it, to be a hero," says Hill. "There aren't that many bad guys we can wipe out without any discrimination. Even when we have a movie where you kill Nazis, you still think, 'Maybe he's not really a Nazi, maybe he has children,' but no one feels bad for zombies so you can just shoot them in the head."

CHILD OF HORROR

Not that Hill is averse to splatter. As a child actor in the big-screen adaptation of his father Stephen King's *Creepshow* (1982), he hung out with legendary special effects man Tom Savini. "He had a book full of autopsy photos and he was just cool," says Hill of his "first rock star". While horror films spook him just as much as anyone else, says Hill, he's the kind of person who "laughs at all the wrong moments, all the moments when everyone else is screaming".

This is something of a recurring theme in conversation with Hill. Discussing his comic *Wraith: Welcome To Christmasland* and its vampire children, he says, "There's horrible, horrible slaughter that goes on for page after page. Oh, it's hilarious to write, it's so funny to write."

Writing hasn't always been so enjoyable. After a long struggle to gain recognition, in part because he refused to use the family name, Hill finally broke through in his mid-thirties with his debut novel *Heart-Shaped Box* (2007). A sophomore slump followed as Hill worked on three books he couldn't finish, "terrible pieces of work", and his marriage broke up. He completed *Horns* (2010) following a big struggle, but even now he prefers the movie version ("The movie is fun, I look at the movie and I think, 'Oh, Dan [Radcliffe] just knocked it out of the park") because he was so miserable when he wrote the book.

TROUBLED MIND

Worse was to follow when Hill went on tour. While the events, which saw Hill joking with his audiences while wearing plastic horns, were fun, his mental state was precarious. "I'd get back to the hotel room and I'd tear the hotel room apart looking for fibre-optic cameras," he says. "I was convinced I was being spied on, I was very paranoid."

Every night he called his father and, "We'd talk about what my latest crazy idea was and he'd patiently go through why it wasn't a realistic thing to think. I'd always had some of that, I'd had flare-ups of this kind of paranoid anxiety, but never so extreme. But after the marriage fell apart, it was like a tsunami of anxiety and some really weird ideas, some really not-normal ideas, about how the world worked and what people thought about me, what people said about me."

Eventually, realising his kids needed a father who wasn't an "unhappy, crazy person", he sought treatment, which he'd been reluctant to do because he was worried it would mess up his creativity. Not true. "What really makes great art is happiness, emotional balance, patience and calm, being connected to people around you," he says. "Depression just sucks, it doesn't make for great art, it makes you a miserable person."

Happily, to use an apposite word, there should be plenty more books ahead. Bibliophile Hill wouldn't have it any other way. He'd like to spend eternity in Waterstones' Piccadilly branch, he jokes. An authors' ashes section, suggests SFX. "You know what, no bookstore has that and it would be so cool," he says. "I like the idea of my ashes in a steel urn and my books below it. And it says something like: 'Remember the man, 50% off your second Joe Hill purchase.' You've always got to be selling, always got to be selling. We can repurpose those ashes to good use." ●

The Fireman is published by Gollancz on 7 June.

Biodata 😃

Occupation

→ Novelist

Born → 4 June 1972

From

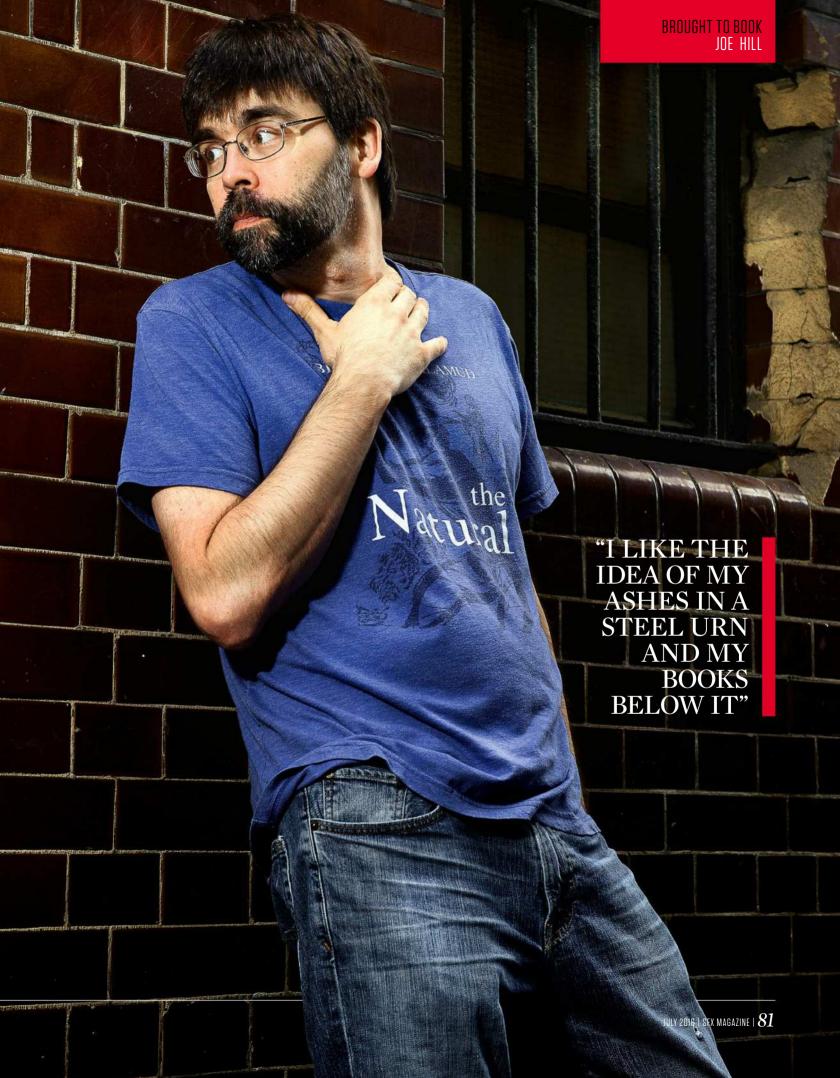
→ Maine, USA Greatest Hits

As well as four novels, including Horns and NOS4R2, Hill has written comics, notably the Locke & Key series (2008-13) illustrated by

Gabriel Rodriguez. Random Fact

→ One of Hill's favourite writers is Bernard Malamud (*The Natural*): "When I write a good sentence, I think, 'That's how Bernie would've written it.' That's my mark of a good sentence."





f there's one thing to take away from Alice In Wonderland, the 2010 live-action adaptation by Tim Burton, it's that some films are just too big to fail. For Alice In Wonderland was, by and large, a critical dud, a movie that many reviewers saw as a sign of Burton's creative fatigue. But it didn't matter. The project sounded too perfect to fail. Tim Burton, one of cinema's greatest surrealists, taking on one of the most surreal stories ever told? Johnny Depp - in a role he was seemingly born to play - as the Mad Hatter? It made over a billion dollars, and is currently the 22nd highest-grossing film ever.

Naturally, this means a sequel: Alice Through The Looking Glass, based on Lewis Carroll's second 1871 novel Through The Looking-Glass, And What Alice Found There. Burton, however, will only be taking on a producing role. Directorial duties now fall to James Bobin, no stranger to breathing life back into franchises. After all, he was the Brit who oversaw the return of the Muppets in 2011, with a cowriting credit for its sequel The Muppets: Most Wanted. Before then, he co-created Flight Of The Conchords, and worked with Sacha Baron Cohen on everything from Ali G to Borat. Still, one of the biggest films of all time, directed by one of the most iconic directors of all time - that's quite an act to follow.

"It's daunting!" laughs Bobin. "But it's also exciting, as Tim's still a producer. So you get to work with one of your heroes. I grew up watching his films, I love his style, his feel. I was so excited that I got to play in that sand pit."

That sand pit, of course, is distinctive and well known. Alongside his "squad" (frequent collaborators Depp and ex-partner Helena Bonham Carter), Alice In Wonderland ticked all the boxes of a Burton flick; wry, gothic aesthetic, larger-than-life characters (literally, in Bonham Carter's case) and wispy, dreamlike dialogue. So surely, when it came to making sand castles of his own, there were limits to what Bobin could do?

INSPECTING LEWIS

"It's not dissimilar to the Muppets," he says. "I never felt inhibited with the Muppets having existed before. I love those characters and I knew them, and I knew what they'd do in certain situations. It's the same with this film. I knew that while I wanted to use a lot of the stylistic feel of Alice In Wonderland, that because my background is primarily in comedy I wanted to bring a sort of lightness to it, a brevity. In my own reading of Lewis Carroll, he is a comic person. A lot of his work is very much surrealist satire. In a weird way he's one of the originators of English humour; that weird, surreal wordplay that you can trace all the way to Monty Python."





66 I imagine that Lewis Carroll was very interested in the idea of time travel 99

Burton's Alice In Wonderland was a pseudo-sequel to Carroll's original novel, with a 19-year-old Alice (Mia Wasikowska) returning to Wonderland 13 years after her previous visit, only to find the world plunged into darkness - with old friends like the Cheshire Cat (Stephen Fry), the White Rabbit (Michael Sheen) and the Mad Hatter living under the tyranny of Bonham-Carter's Red Queen. Alice Through The Looking Glass is similarly loose in its adaptation; taking the key

Mia Wasikowska's Alice

discovers the abysmal

depths of chess.

elements of Carroll's unfilmable second book (Alice returning to Wonderland via a mirror; finding herself in a reverse mirror world: lots of chess) and fleshing them out into a story that will work on the big screen.

"I love the idea of going through the looking glass. Carroll kind of invented the idea of a portal, which is such a brilliant idea. It's

classic Carroll, thinking about things in a way that people hadn't ever thought about before. I wanted to explore that backwards element, to keep the drama of the world, but not to tie ourselves too closely to a book that is basically Carroll having fun as a mathematician, of telling a nonsensical story about chess. It's an odd book; non-linear and a bit non-consequential."

DEPP FOCUS

The film, however, needs a focus, and that comes in the form of Depp's Mad Hatter, the zany highlight of the original who is now in danger of losing much of his muchness.

"Johnny Depp is such a brilliant performer," says Bobin, "and I knew exactly what I wanted his character to be in this film - which is basically its emotional engine. Johnny's Hatter has a great vulnerability to him, and this is all about his tragedy - a belief that his family is still alive, a belief that is literally killing him. And a threat to the Hatter is a threat to that whole world, as he is the embodiment of it."

Helena Bonham Carter's Red Queen doesn't care that it's rude to point

surrounded only by these mechanical dudes who look after his world. He's an antagonist, but an antagonist you'd like, and possibly feel sorry for and be amused by. One of the things about Sacha is he's very good at playing that sort of vulnerable, sad character. Borat was a guy you liked, but felt sorry for." The future is unclear, but Alice's timetravelling adventure will most certainly take her into Wonderland's past; not only

> vounger versions of characters we already know. Basically, not only is Alice Through The Looking Glass a sequel, but a prequel too.

"Carroll was only about 30 years before HG Wells but I imagine, as a mathematician, he was very interested in the idea of time travel. And for us, it's interesting to explain how those characters came to be, and why

Red Queen, and her rivalry with the White Queen (Anne Hathaway). I loved the idea of trying to explain where that came from - and how sometimes things are not as black and white as you think it might be. There are reasons why people are the way they are - even in Wonderland." •

they interact like they do in the future. Take the

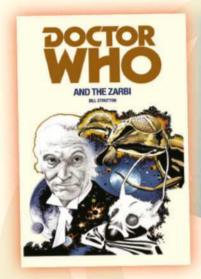
introducing us to new additions like the Mad Hatter's father, played by Rhys Ifans, but to Johnny Depp had only just realised

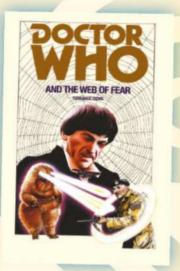
In order to save her friend, Alice must turn to Time himself, a new character (although one mentioned in the first novel) that is part human, part clock, and played by Bobin's long-time collaborator Sacha Baron Cohen.

"There's something very British about asking someone, 'Please may I travel through time?' I knew Sacha would be perfect for that. Time is a ridiculous, incredibly pompous despot, but he also lives on his own, in this gigantic castle,

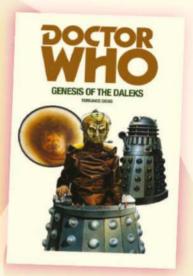
Alice Through The Looking Glass opens on 27 May.

Seven iconic Doctor Who novels – back for the first time.

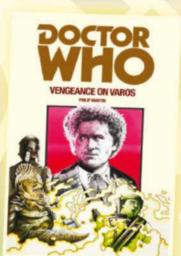














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& FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

Calum Waddell bites into the behind-the-scenes trauma of Italian horror's most menacing monster

movie... Illustration by Graham Humphreys

ood old Lucio Fulci.

Once a byword for irredeemable, tabloid-

troubling VHS-era sleaze, the grand old man of gore - who passed away in 1996 - has since garnered a late-in-the-day appreciation that has resulted in many of his movies being reevaluated as legitimate genre classics. Take Zombie Flesh Eaters. Despite being conceived and marketed as a George Romero cash-in (Romero's Dawn Of The Dead was released in Italy as Zombi, so Fulci's film slipped out as Zombi 2), many critics and fans now argue that this distinctly Euro-splatter twist on walking-corpse terror has a unique identity of its own. Indeed, whereas Romero's film is awash with metaphors of capitalism and consumerism, Fulci's work is far more escapist and fantastical - rooted in old voodoo pulp with a comic book story of a Mediterranean island under siege from a number of meat-munching corpses. Heading the fight to stay alive under tropical duress, and the threat of being eaten alive, is a Scottish journalist (Ian McCulloch), a woman searching for her scientist father (Tisa Farrow), a marooned boat captain (Al Cliver) and an English doctor (the late, great

Richard Johnson). Add to this heady mix a zombie fighting a shark - a sequence later used to advertise Windows 7 of all things - and the momentous, if misogynistic, moment in which a woman has her eyeball punctured by a large shard of wood and you have an unparalleled and ambitious gross-out epic.

"The cast and crew arrived on Santa Domingo without a penny," Zombie Flesh Eaters star and B-movie veteran Al Cliver tells SFX. "Then the next morning everything was covered and the producers were rich with local currency. None of us knew how. They paid most of us with cash-inhand. It was crazy. I never questioned what was going on! As for me, I was just unsure of what I was even making. I did not even know there had been a Zombi part one!"

In Zombie Flesh Eaters, Cliver is one of three performers who manages to make it to the end credits in (almost) one piece. Portraying the bearded sailor Brian Hull, who finds >







intestinal-hungry hordes, Cliver would go on to act in such later Fulci flicks as The Black Cat (1980) and The Beyond (1981). Not that this should indicate that pair had any kind of pleasant rapport on the set...

"Shouting was the very minimum," admits Cliver. "He offended people every single day. He had to have a stupid nickname for everyone - except for Richard Johnson, who was too important for him to upset, and Tisa Farrow who he fell in love with. Everyone else. however, was fair game. Fulci was ugly and dirty, like a small child eating Nutella. He was also a genius, exasperating and very difficult. He soon gave me the nickname 'Tufus', and his reasoning was as follows: whilst Michelangelo had been given Carrara marble to create his masterpieces, the production team had only conceded him a bit of tufa rock from the outskirts of Rome, and from that he had to carve out the semblance of an actor?



aturally, no discussion of Zombie Flesh Eaters can possibly take place without some talk of the film's centrepiece: the aforementioned and much-beloved moment in which a topless scuba diver

(played by Auretta Gay) comes across a peckish tiger shark and an underwater ghoul during the same sea-session. Luckily for her, though, the fearsome-fish and the aquatic living-dead entity have more interest in battling each other. What commences is one of the most amazing moments ever committed to genre celluloid. According to Cliver, though, the real fight was taking place above the water.

THE SORT-

How Fulci spawned an unlikely franchise Given that Zombie

Flesh Eaters was pitched as a sequel to . Dawn Of The Dead in Italy, it makes perfect sense that Zombi 3 would emerge in 1988. Made for scant change in the Philippines, long after the Italian horror boom had dried up, and finished by the producers after Fulci fell ill, Zombi 3 takes its cashstrapped cues from the comedy-carnage of *Return Of The Living Dead* rather than George Romero. Despite being a flop, *Zombi 3* gave way to *Zombi 4* (1989), a made-for-VHS voodoo-themed cheapie that offers actors in cut-price Halloween masks and butcher shop special effects. Fulci had nothing to do with it – nor with the Zombi 5: Killing Birds (1987), which introduces airborne antagonists and which was, bizarrely, released two years before the fourth instalment!

"Auretta Gay was an aspiring actress with very little experience and she disappeared soon after Zombie Flesh Eaters," recalls the actor - who portrays her boyfriend in the film. "I cannot say I

Clearly not advocates

of a vegan diet.

blame her for not chasing her film career after the way Lucio Fulci treated her. You see, Lucio had no time for anyone who was not a 'real' performer and he was generally sadistic towards women anyway. Auretta had just been cast because she was pretty and she had a nice body for her nude scenes. They took this beautiful, but naive, young lady from Rome and flew her out to the Caribbean so she was awestruck. The first day she fell asleep under a tree wearing a tiny thong. It might have been her first time abroad and, of course, she got horribly sunburnt. So she turned up the next morning begging Lucio to do the shark sequence some other time. She was told no so she asked Fulci if she could cover herself with

at least the top half of a scuba wet suit - rather than being topless. Fulci nixed that idea with relish: 'Miss, seeing as I have no proof of your acting ability, I would prefer at least to take advantage of your physical attributes, which yesterday you were so keen to show off.' The other drawback was that Ms Gay couldn't swim. Fulci could have shot the scene near the shore, pointing the camera towards



the horizon. Instead, he declared: 'Let's go off shore!' The production was in no way worried about the actress's safety, of course, but she was pleading with him to give her a break."

Not that Fulci, who was then 52 years old and largely struggling to cement himself as a filmmaker of any commercial standing, would have any of it...

"She cried and she was shaking," continues Cliver. "She said, 'I am really not capable of doing this,' and Fulci exploded and said, 'I do not know what producer you had sex with in order to be on this film but if you do not get in the water I am firing you from this movie and getting any good-looking local lady to take your spot because even they will be able to act better than you! You are nothing! You are useless! You can even find your own flight home!' So she agreed, finally, and they got the scene done - but when she dove into the water, she asked that I was there to catch her along with some of the crew. Fulci was relishing her tears so much, though, he made her dive into the ocean six times in a row - despite the fact the first take was fine. She was also hurting because when she put on her oxygen tank it cut at her skin which was already torn with the sun. To make matters worse she had to be in

the water with a shark. It was a nightmare for her. She was terrified of Lucio; she just wanted to go home after that." Curiously, though, Fulci had nothing but respect for the

film's other female star - Tisa Farrow, sister of Mia.

"The only woman that Fulci loved was Tisa Farrow." maintains Cliver. "He adored her. I do not know why he worshipped her - sure, she was pretty, but so was Auretta. I guess maybe it was because she was a bit of a hippy; she didn't want for anything and just had an easy-going charm. Every time it was our lunch break she had her food brought to her by the crew - on Lucio's demand. He would get the workers to perch a hammock up for her and give her a fan. Fulci was crazy about making sure she was comfortable and she never had any complaints about him."

ltimately, as Cliver confirms, no one who worked on Zombie Flesh Eaters thought that they were in the midst of crafting a controversial classic. While the cast was attempting to deal with their hot-tempered director, the man in charge was also unaware that he was making the sort of gore-drenched gem that would scandalise entire countries and also stand the test of time.

"Lucio also did not want to be there," maintains Cliver. "He thought that this was some low budget horror film that everyone in Italy would laugh at him for making. He was an intellectual and well-read man who wanted to be appreciated for making some kind of critical masterwork. People often ask me, 'Al, why do the zombies move so slow in that movie?' I tell them, 'It's because it meant they could

> be on the screen for longer because Fulci hardly had a dime to make this film with!' When we shot the ending, where Ian and Tisa and I are firing at the zombies in the barn, it was done in one evening and with very little resources. Then Fulci called 'cut' and I think he was as relieved as anyone that it was all done. Not one of us believed it was going to be a blockbuster or anything.'

> Yet, a "blockbuster" it most certainly was. Released in the USA as Zombie (with the evocative tagline "We Are Going to Eat You"), the film not only ended up splashed on the front cover of Fangoria magazine but it also introduced a new generation to the thrills of Italian horror. Perhaps even more than Dario Argento, Fulci would become one of the first fright-film icons of the VHS age - especially when Zombie Flesh Eaters was banned in the UK and demonised by the likes of Mary Whitehouse. Years later, however, it's cemented itself as one of cinema's most malevolent, and stylish, splatter sickies...

"Lucio died just as his work was beginning to be understood," laments Cliver. "He would call me towards the end of his life and he would say, 'Tufus, how are you?' and he would be depressed. He would say, 'Do you know that in the UK and the USA they call me a legend? But here in Rome I am nobody.' I would say, 'Try not to worry about it, Lucio. No great artist is appreciated in their lifetime.' And I guess I was correct..." •

The Grand Old Man of Gore

It was his shift into splatter cinema with Zombie Flesh Eaters that won Lucio Fulci international critical acclaim. Following this triumph, the director would helm such enthusiastically esoteric horror romps as City Of The Living Dead (1980), The Beyond (1981) and The House By The Cemetery (1982). Sadly, by the latter part of the decade he would be reduced to made-for-TV dreck and cheapie VHS outings. Indeed, only the hardiest of explorers is advised to try and tolerate Sodoma's Ghost fright-less film about Nazi spirits) or Door To Silence (an exercise in boredom in which a man chases his own hearse for 90 minutes)





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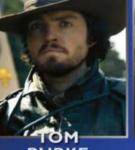
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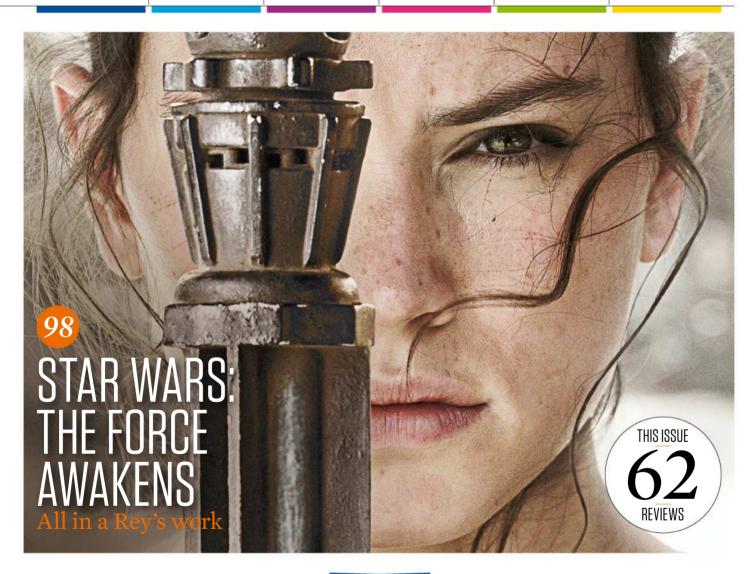
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→ Will the new sci-fi show from the makers of Misfits make you triple?



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→ Stephen Baxter and Alastair Reynolds homage

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED

*** SUPERB

★★★★ GOOD

*** AVERAGE

** POOR

Arthur C Clarke.

* TERRIBLE



BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

Long Dark Knight of the soul



RELEASED OUT NOW!

12A | 151 minutes

Director Zack Snyder

Cast Henry Cavill, Ben Affleck, Gal Gadot, Jesse Eisenberg, Diane Lane

At one point during "the

greatest gladiator match in the history of the world" Batman rips a rusted sink from a grimy toilet wall and uses it to smash Superman upside the head. By the end of this bludgeoning prize fight of a movie your own cranium may sympathise.

Make no mistake. Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice wants to clobber you into submission, crush you beneath the weight of its messianic imagery, its suffocating self-importance and scrotum-clutching macho dialogue ("You're not brave," taunts the Dark Knight, bar-brawl style. "Men are brave.") After two-and-a-half hours of rainlashed, operatically-scored pomposity even its unwieldy title feels like a blow to the skull. The R-rated, three-hour director's cut promised for Blu-ray may cause actual internal bleeding.

As a modern blockbuster it's a slog, a leaden, joyless experience, so intent on staking out an alternative to Marvel's breezy charm that it buries the very idea of fun. As a key building block in the creation of a big-screen DC Universe it's an almighty misstep. As a Superman film, even one that shares billing with the last son of Krypton's edgier Gotham City counterpart, it's precariously close to a betrayal of its source material.

It begins promisingly enough. Zack Snyder restages Batman's origin story with fetishistic





devotion to the visual lore of the comic strip and follows this murderous orgy of pearls and bullets with Bruce Wayne crashing the last reel of 2013's Man Of Steel. just in time to witness the devastation unleashed by Superman's battle with Zod.

It's a telling choice in a sequel compelled to apologise for its predecessor. Man Of Steel famously drew criticism for its seeming disregard for the civilians caught in the apocalyptic crossfire of its climax. During Dawn Of Justice's own carnage-packed finale Wonder Woman pointedly

asks, "Why did you bring the fight to the city?" only for Batman to state, "The port is abandoned." It feels like the filmmakers holding up a card with the words "See! We listened!" scrawled on it.

Bruce Wayne's retconned presence in the Metropolis disaster zone gives us the best scene in the movie. A gripping, propulsive opening, it's a sequence powered by 9/11 imagery - people stumble, shell-shocked, through an ash cloud - and places us firmly at ground level, gazing up at the affairs of gods. More importantly, it establishes Bruce Wayne as a

Reviews



people's champion, racing selflessly into peril to save a little girl. This guy, the film assures us, cares about the collateral damage.

Affleck makes a compelling Bruce Wayne, for all the Twitterstorm that greeted his casting. He's intense, haunted, brutalised by tragedy but able to put on a roguish playboy front. And he's an impressively physical Batman, his sheer, bruising bulk clearly homaging Frank Miller's steroidal take in The Dark Knight Returns. Snyder introduces him as the stuff of urban horror stories, "a devil", taking down human traffickers.

We first glimpse him crouched upon the wall of a derelict building, more vampire than vigilante - a "weird creature of the night", as the early comic books used to call him. Trading banter with Jeremy Irons' amusingly mordant Alfred, Batman's one of the few things this movie just about gets right, murderous inclinations aside.

Superman's more problematic. Infinitely more problematic. Oh, Snyder loves framing him in celestial poses, cape rippling against the clouds, awesome as a Michelangelo, but this deification

only keeps the character at a distance, as remote as the duelling sky gods Bruce Wayne glimpses in Metropolis. Henry Cavill's an actor with charm and magnetism to spare but he's a drab, morose presence in this, burdened by godhood and lumbered with a script that's pure Kryptonite, reducing the Man of Steel to the object of other people's agendas with no compelling throughline of his own.

The film keeps asking, "Must there be a Superman?" It's a valid, provocative question - and the title of a classic '70s comic book

66 A slog – a leaden, joyless experience 99

story - but it's articulated in the most thumpingly literal way. We're shown snippets of a TV debate, the opinions of real-life talking heads Neil deGrasse Tyson and Charlie Rose intercut with scenes of Kal-El performing heroic acts. Snyder's a gifted visual stylist and some of these shots are genuinely glorious - the sight of Superman hauling an overturned ship across an ice floe is pure Silver Age poetry - but they're pieces of artwork, frames to hang on your wall. The visuals bow down before the icon but the screenplay stints on characterisation, leaving Cavill with precious little to play.

Then again, you suspect Zack Snyder fundamentally misunderstands Superman. For all the noble deeds we witness there are unsettling moral currents swirling around this take on Siegel and Shuster's creation. "You don't owe the world a thing," Martha Kent tells her son. "You never did." It's a statement that cuts against the very heart of this Depressionborn American folklore, more Avn Rand than John Steinbeck. The film's take-home image is a glowering Superman with demonically red eyes, scowling in a storm, more a creature of Hell than the Kansas plains.

As the film lumbers toward the inevitable cape-on-cape showdown, we're introduced to primo Superman nemesis Lex Luthor, played as a twitchy, candy-scoffing sociopath by The Social Network's Jesse Eisenberg. It's a performance of truly teeth-rattling awfulness, a Looney Tunes assault of tics and chimp noises, subtle as an asteroid strike. It's genuinely terrifying: you dread what painfully mannered acting move he'll make next.

Also in the mix is Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman. She's underused - essentially a walking trailer for her solo movie - but she's good for all that the screenplay \rightarrow

Reviews Get sci-fi news, reviews and features at gamesradar.com/sfx



shortchanges her. In her secret identity as Diana Prince she has a Bond girl allure, all smoky foreign accent and designer label glamour, and she's equally charismatic in Amazon princess mode.

Inevitably our heroes ruck: the moment, the hashtag that every beat of this behemoth of a movie has been built around, backwardsengineered from. Snyder clearly wants to replay the iconic clash of capes in The Dark Knight Returns an acknowledged influence – but this has none of Frank Miller's crackling political energy. Instead we get a lunk-headed misunderstanding on Batman's part that's resolved with a laughably easy change of heart. The brawl itself is just as perfunctory, for all that Snyder strives to bring a lofty Wagnerian grandeur to shots of a knightly, armoured Batman clutching a glowing Kryptonite lance in the rain.

It all climaxes with our heroes teaming their grimaces against Doomsday, a charmless '90s comic book villain brought to the screen in fantastically uninteresting style. He's a dumb brute threat with the look of an early Lord Of The Rings videogame. By this point your senses are so pulped by the onslaught of overwrought imagery and clanging Hans Zimmer chords that you long for the street-level storytelling that made the opening Metropolis scene so effective. But no. Snyder's out to pulverise you,

remember. Bam. Bam. Bam. Is that blood coming out of your ears?

Crippled by incoherent storytelling - dream sequences play out like non-sequiturs, high on cool visuals, low on sense, dependent on future films to decode their meaning - and portentous dialogue (seriously, Lex - shut up about god and the devil. We get it already), Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice is, ultimately, a grim advertisement for the burgeoning big-screen DCU. You simply don't want to spend time in this place. There has to be a course correction, a brightening of tone, an admission that all this scowly adolescent posturing is a bad fit for such a vibrant and colourful sandbox.

More crucially, with our planet seemingly darkening at the edges every day, it's criminal to create a movie that shuts out kids, the lifeblood of superhero stories. This is bleak, ugly stuff. We're told that the S on Superman's chest stands for hope. It's hard to believe on the strength of this deadening Sturm und Drang.

"It's not 1938," says Daily Planet editor Perry White, in a sarcastic reference to the year the Man of Steel arrived on newsstands. No, it's 2016, and yes, Mr White, there must be a Superman - and one who knows how to soar. Nick Setchfield

The end credits confirm that Superman's pal Jimmy Olsen gets a bullet in the head in the first reel. Heartwarming stuff, eh?

UNIVERSE BUILDING

What BVS means for the DCU



- Batman's lost a Robin - but which one? The memorial suit in the Batcave is daubed with the Joker's graffiti, nodding to 1988's infamous comic book tale A Death In The Family, which saw the crime clown slaughter Jason Todd, Dick Grayson's replacement. Could we see flashbacks to the Boy Wonder's demise in Suicide Squad?
- The desert dream sequence finds the Dark Knight fighting Parademons, the troopers of Darkseid, warmongering ruler of the planet Apokolips (we glimpse his omega symbol too). The Big Bad of Jack Kirby's Fourth World mythology, Darkseid brings a truly cosmic scale of threat to DC's screen universe.
- There's more connective tissue to the Fourth World in our glimpse of Cyborg's origin. Victor Stone's transformation into a man-machine utilises a Mother Box, a sentient piece of tech that accesses the power of the Source (Kirby's equivalent of the Force).
- Yes, that's Chris Pine as Steve Trevor in the vintage photograph of Wonder Woman, cueing up her WW1-set solo movie in 2017 Will we see the events that compelled her to abandon humanity for almost a century? "I've killed things from other worlds before," she tells us - another hint?



- In a vision, Superman blames Batman for the loss of "her" - Lois Lane, we imagine, given the Flash's warning that the Daily Planet journo is the key to this hazily defined future armageddon. The scarlet speedster's cameo here recalls his desperate dash through time in 1986's Crisis On Infinite Earths. Superman blaming Batman for Lois's death was a key plot point in videogame and comic series Injustice: Gods Among Us.
- Are we really doing The Death Of Superman already? It feels unearned, given this is only Cavill's second shot at the role. If the films stick to DC continuity we're in for a take on Reign Of The Supermen, which saw four pretenders attempt to replace the Man of Steel.
- Lex's prison number is 167TK. Issue 167 of Superman saw supervillains unite in "The Team Of Luthor And Brainiac!" just a coincidence?
- "He's coming and he's hungry!" warns Lex. But who? Darkseid? Brainiac? Matter-Eater Lad from the Legion of Superheroes?







27 APRIL – 6 MAY 2016 SCI-FI-LONDON.COM

















Shooty Shooty Bang Bang



RELEASED OUT NOW!

- 18 96 minutes
- Director Ilya Naishuller
- Cast Sharlto Copley, Danila Kozlovsky, Haley Bennett, Tim Roth

Fancy playing a first-person

shooter, but without all the tedious joystick-handling and button-pushing? Then look no further than Hardcore Henry, a ludicrously violent Russian-American co-production that's sure to be a big hit with the Xbox generation, though less videogame-attuned audiences may find it all rather draining.

The first-person camera puts the audience in the position of Henry, a cybernetic soldier who's resurrected from death with no memory and no vocal cords. Receiving instructions from various characters named Jimmy (Sharlto Copley), Henry embarks on a mission to save his wife (Haley Bennett) from a telekinetic albino supervillain (Danila Kozlovsky).

If it's high-energy action you want, then it certainly delivers - you're never more than a few seconds away from a gunfight, explosion or car chase. On a technical level, the film is frequently astonishing, and there's a slightly subversive edge to locking the audience into the perspective of a bloodthirsty killing machine.

However, Henry's total absence of character results in a frustratingly empty experience, emotionally speaking, while the non-stop barrage of action eventually becomes exhausting.

Matthew Turner

Heavy use of first-person perspective is nothing new: 1947 noir Lady In The Lake is all seen from the POV of a Pl.



THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

No White



RELEASED OUT NOW!

12A | 117 minutes

Director Cedric Nicolas-Trovan Cast Chris Hemsworth, Charlize Theron, Emily Blunt, Jessica Chastain

This is the prequel/sequel to the film that caused a Hollywood scandal back in 2012

- when Kristen Stewart, who played the titular heroine of Snow White And The Huntsman, was reported to have had an affair with married director Rupert Sanders. The negative press was a shame, really, because the film wasn't that bad, deserving more than the infamy surrounding it.

It's no surprise, then, that Winter's War ditches poor Snow entirely, focusing instead on Chris Hemsworth's Eric - from his days as a child training to be a Huntsman to what he does after helping Snow White. Back then, evil Queen Ravenna (a dazzling Charlize Theron) was defeated, so this film mostly focuses on her ice-queen sister Freya (Emily

Blunt). Betrayed by the father of her child, broken-hearted Freva has declared that love be banished from her realm. So when Eric falls in love with Jessica Chastain's fellow warrior Sara, Freya's not too chuffed about it...

Add to this a quest to find Ravenna's magic mirror, some British dwarves who get all the best lines (and swear words...) and a few whiffs of Lord Of The Rings; oh, and some truly jaw-dropping CGI - one sequence in particular practically begs you to stand up and applaud. However, there's still not quite enough originality in the script for it to spring any surprises. Freya is far too similar a figure to Elsa in *Frozen*, the twists are all but signposted with klaxons, and you can't shake the sense you've seen it all before. It's an enjoyable enough affair and looks ravishing, but it does feel as though something is missing. Snow White, perhaps? Jayne Nelson

The ruins featured in the film are Waverley Abbev in Farnham, Surrey - also seen in 28 Days Later and Hot Fuzz.



Wipe it from your memory

RELEASED OUT NOW!

- 15 | 113 minutes
- Director Ariel Vromen
- Cast Kevin Costner, Gary Oldman, Tommy Lee Jones, Alice Eve

Kevin Costner, Gary

Oldman and Tommy Lee Jones? No. this is not the JFK reunion you were looking for. The Iceman director Ariel Vromen fumbles this appalling London-set thriller as Costner's psycho criminal Jericho Stewart - all collared and chained up like Hannibal Lecter in his cell - receives memory implants from Ryan Revnolds' dead-by-theopening-scene CIA agent. Why? Because he has no frontal lobes, making him the perfect subject/victim for this pioneering tech, as the Agency look to track down a geek. known as "The Dutchman", who's selling nuclear codes to the highest bidder.

Horribly violent and laughably written ("Who punches someone in a patisserie, you animal?" is one choice morsel, as a luckless café-dweller gets biffed on the nose by Costner), the visuals are dour and the stunts circa '70s Sweeney. Jones, as the memory-swap medic, and Oldman, as the CIA head, are on autopilot, while Costner grizzles like the proverbial sore-headed bear. Alice Eve, meanwhile, seems to exist just to get gunned down in a Docklands shootout. Only Gal "Wonder Woman" Gadot, as the dead agent's widow, has any cred in this pap. James Mottram

Filming for the medical research labs and CIA operations centre took place at Croydon College.

Reviews



ARABIAN NIGHTS

A trio of wonders



▶ RELEASED OUT NOW!/

29 APRIL/6 MAY

TBC | 382 minutes Director Miguel Gomes

Cast Crista Alfaiate, Dinarte Branco,

Carloto Cotta, Adriano Luz

Released over three

consecutive weeks in separate volumes - The Restless One, The Desolate One, The Enchanted One totalling nearly six-and-a-half hours, this ambitious trilogy by Portuguese filmmaker Miguel Gomes is no straight adaptation of stories that comprise One Thousand And One Nights. Instead it borrows the conceit of Scheherazade (Crista Alfaiate) telling nightly tales to her kingly husband in an effort to stay alive. but bends those stories so that they might pass comment on a modern-day Portugal crippled by austerity measures.

If that all sounds a little high-minded and dry, it's saved from being so by an eclectic soundtrack, a palpable love of storytelling, deep humanism, righteous fury, bawdy humour, and Gomes's startling ability to shuffle tones, genres and eras. Surely the

first film to leap from the testimony of laid-off dockyard workers to tales bursting with genies, princes and outlaws, Arabian Nights veers from the naturalistic to the fantastical, from documentary to fiction.

Volumes one and two are especially captivating, as Gomes tells how he charged a team of researchers with scouring Portugal in search of tales. Philosophy and allegory are ripe: foreign wasps kill off the indigenous bee population; a committee of politicians drink a magical potion and develop rampant erections; and a cockerel on trial for crowing too early defends himself.

Volume three contains treasures too, though a faux-documentary on singing chaffinches outstays its welcome. The great thing about Arabian Nights is that if one story isn't to your liking, another soon pops up, so the decision to give this tale a feature-length running time is perplexing. Quibbles aside, however, this is daring, magical filmmaking. Jamie Graham

Gomes didn't divide the stories up until the edit. There was a nine-hour version, where the chaffinch section ran 160 minutes!



Arthouse headscratcher



RELEASED 8 MAY

15 | 81 minutes

Director Lucile Hadzihalilovic

Cast Max Brebant, Roxanne Duran, Julie Marie-Parmentier

Evolution brings to mind

Alice's verdict on "Jabberwocky": "It seems very pretty, but it's rather hard to understand." This is a cryptic, small-world mystery with few answers, set on an island inhabited by impassive mothers and their little boys (all about ten). The story follows one of those boys. Nicolas, who's suspicious of the set-up, though he can't get out of going to a weird dark hospital where he's anaesthetised and then... strange things happen.

If you found Under The Skin and Upstream Colour too obvious and predictable, then you might be the target audience. Evolution is absorbing for the first half, with its wondrous imagery of a vitalised undersea ecosystem, all drifting fronds and particles, and Nicolas's on-shore investigations, which lead to a striking reveal of what the island women do at night. But the hospital scenes just drag on. The story can be seen allegorically, as a child's nightmare of, for example, where babies really come from. (Alternatively, perhaps repeated images of starfish are the crucial clue to what's happening.) But this glaciallypaced film might have had more impact as a three-minute music video. Andrew Osmond

Evolution was filmed on Lanzarote, the Canary Island which stood in for the Moon in Doctor Who's "Kill The Moon".



RATCHET

RELEASED 29 APRIL

U | 94 minutes

Videogame odd couple

Ratchet - a wisecracking, cat-like alien - and Clank - a diminutive, deadpan robot have headlined over a dozen galactic adventures. This CG toon explains the pair's origins.

It's extremely faithful to the games, with the main voice actors reprising their roles alongside a surprisingly starry supporting cast. But the humour hasn't translated well. while the music seems to have been ripped straight from a PS2 disc. Jordan Farley

ALSO+0UT



Two mighty superhero blockbusters screened after our deadline. On 29 April the Avengers are split asunder, when **CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL** WAR hits cinemas. Then on 18 May, Oscar Isaac's godlike first mutant brings the End Times in X-MEN: **APOCALYPSE**. The end is also nigh in THESE FINAL HOURS (6 May), set 12 hours before a firestorm consumes Australia. Also in selected cinemas: soldiers vs robots actioner **KILL COMMAND** (13 May) and VR tale THE CALL UP (20 May); since both are also available via VOD or on DVD, you'll find our reviews in the home entertainment section.



HOME ENTERTAINMENT

STAR WARS: THE FORCE **AWAKENS**

A Newer Hope

EXTRAS *** RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD/download Director JJ Abrams

Cast John Boyega, Daisy Ridley, Harrison Ford, Oscar Isaac Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill

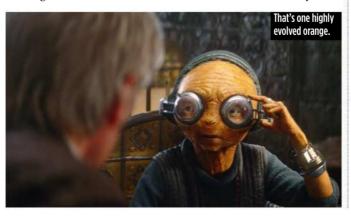
There's a haunting early image in The Force Awakens. The husks of fallen Star Destroyers dominate the horizon of desert world Jakku. They look like ancient ruins in the empty sands, remnants of a lost age. It's a striking metaphor. Nearly 40 years on we're all still living in the monumental shadows of Star Wars, still dominated by its iconography.

And just like desert scavenger Rey, JJ Abrams is out to salvage what he can from the relics of a previous generation - sifting the useful parts from the broken, lashing them together with a technician's eye, running voltage through the scrap until the machinery sparks back into life. Building the new out of the old.

It's over four months since the release of Star Wars Episode VII, one of the most anticipated, most dissected films in Hollywood history. It was a hard movie to process at Christmas. While the original trilogy felt set in stone, the paint was still fresh on this upstart addition to the mythology. Now it's in our homes, on DVD and Blu-ray, and even moments that at first felt jarring - like the low-key death of a beloved character - have been absorbed into the saga; have become Star Wars.

You remember how much it gets right, for all its rehashed Death Star strike and half-hearted treasure hunt plot. Yes, Abrams fetishistically recreates the look and texture we love but, more crucially, the new trio of leads have life in their veins. You want to follow them on their damn fool idealistic crusades.

And then there's that last, inscrutable shot of Mark Hamill. When Rey hands the lightsaber to Luke it feels authentically





Arthurian, crackling with the promise of new myths to build, new stories to tell, in Episode VIII and beyond. We're on an uncharted world but that's the moment, more than any other, that welcomes us home. The Force isn't just awake. It's alive.

• Extras It's no easy task finding something new to say about The Force Awakens, a film that's been so heavily promoted that there are probably Amazonian tribes without technology that know JJ Abrams turned the film down when Kathleen Kennedy first asked him to direct it. Yet the

66 You want to follow the new trio 🤧

makers of the star attraction here, the 69-minute Secrets Of The Force Awakens: A Cinematic Journey, manage to pull off a quality Making Of, even if it never quite achieves the level of "warts and all" (which was unlikely in any case).

Naturally, there's unparalleled access behind-the-scenes at almost every stage of the film's development

Reviews



and production, and it does generate a few candid moments that elevate the entertainment level - such as Adam Driver's admission of nerves about shooting that infamous scene with his on-screen father. It's also helped by the palpable energy from all involved, boosted by the ineffable charm of John Boyega and Daisy Ridley. We'd have liked more from them; there's clear evidence that a longer chat between the two was shot, so perhaps that's lurking on a hard drive somewhere, waiting to be released on a future Special Edition. Amidst all the puff-piece

love-in praise, there are moments of raw truth (including Kathleen Kennedy admitting that original screenwriter Michael Arndt didn't feel he could deliver in time. resulting in the switch to Lawrence Kasdan working alongside Abrams), and yet some things remain unexplored - including Harrison Ford's on-set leg injury, which Abrams has talked about openly in interviews, but we suppose is avoided because of the health and safety case about it. Elsewhere, the deleted scenes (three minutes) are skimpy and don't really add a lot to our

appreciation for the final film and the much-hyped piece on the first table read (four minutes) feels like it was snipped out of the main documentary for no good reason. There are also six interesting short featurettes (41 minutes) looking at how the many creatures came to life, BB-8's birth and development, the climactic snowy lightsaber clash (all shot on a set), John Williams's music, and Star Wars charity Force For Change.

Nick Setchfield/James White

The VFX team for the Millennium Falcon scanned in images of the original model and replicated all the decals in detail.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

The best bonus bits



EAR-LEIA

One of the more interesting deleted scenes reveals that General Organa was originally supposed to be introduced in the film earlier, learning of the Jakku massacre. But her arrival on Takodana had more emotional heft given her reunion with Han Solo.

CARRIE ON

In a typical moment of honesty from Secrets Of The Force Awakens, Carrie Fisher admits she made mistakes on her first day because she was so nervous to return to the character.



REY OF LIGHT

Finding Rey was the crucial part of casting, and JJ Abrams admits that he was worried about finding someone. But Daisy Ridley blew everyone away with her audition - we see a snippet of it in *Secrets* Of The Force Awakens

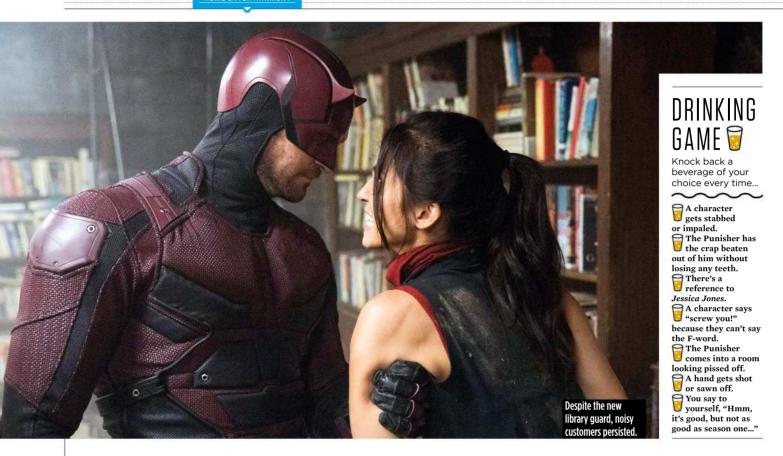
PEGGED OUT

In Creating Creatures, Simon Pegg says that his character, Unkar Plutt, required a suit that was "worryingly hot" when shooting in Abu Dhabi, but he put up with his "silicone prison" because of the chance to be in Star Wars.





HOME ENTERTAINMEN



DAREDEVIL Season Two

Crime And Punishment



RELEASED OUT NOW!

2016 | Available to stream

Showrunners Doug Petrie.

Marco Ramirez

Cast Charlie Cox. Deborah Ann Woll. Elden Henson, Jon Bernthal

NETFLIX If Battlestar Galactica

(Ronald D Moore version) was the science fiction series for people who don't like science fiction, then Netflix's Daredevil is the superhero show for comicsphobes. When it debuted in 2015, it seemed to have been made more for connoisseurs of Breaking Bad and Mad Men than for fans of the likes of Arrow.

Season one certainly wore its superhero clothes lightly. With limited SF elements and a

protagonist who only suits up in the final episode, it was barely a superhero drama at all. Season two at least feels less ashamed about its identity as a Marvel series. Introducing some light fantasy to the show, as well as some proper costumed heroics, this feels a little bit further away from The Wire (season one showrunner Steven S DeKnight's main inspiration) and a bit closer to Agents Of SHIELD.

Much of the pre-publicity focused on Walking Dead alumnus Jon Bernthal's Punisher, a comics favourite who's proved notoriously difficult to get right in three dimensions. Thankfully, the testosterone-drenched Bernthal proves heaven-sent casting. Even with little dialogue, he crackles on-screen, with the actor making

us ache with empathy for this man whose life was ripped apart by three stray bullets. Sadly, after a Frank Castle-centred first half-season, the series then takes a narrative lurch towards a group of mystical-headed drug smugglers named the Hand; after the gut-punch of the Punisher, they're a disappointingly faceless and indistinct threat.

Élodie Yung proves similarly note-perfect casting as Elektra Natchios, a character also previously screwed-up on-screen. Having another leg-chopping, asswhupping vigilante by Daredevil's side has upped the choreographed beauty of the fight scenes, certainly - though there's still nothing here that trumps season one's celebrated hallway scrap.

Structurally, there wasn't a dropped stitch in season one. Season two, however, feels awkwardly paced and unfocused. Not only does the narrative take a few jarring swerves, but the season's two showcase characters - the Punisher and Elektra - don't share a single scene together, or even reference each other. The show is still seductively brooding and tough as nails, but new showrunners Doug Petrie and Marco Ramirez lack Steven S DeKnight's sureness of touch and clarity of vision.

There's still much to love though, including some pleasingly underplayed references connecting this series up to Jessica Jones, and (minor spoiler) a welcome appearance by the reliably scene-stealing Vincent D'Onofrio as Wilson Fisk. Season two isn't a stinker by any means, but it struggles to stand as proud as its debut season. Steve O'Brien

Jon Bernthal is the fourth actor to play the Punisher on screen, after Dolph Lundgre Thomas Jane and Ray Stevenson.





YAKUZA Apocalypse

BloodFellas



RELEASED 2 MAY

2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

- Director Takashi Miike
- Cast Yayan Ruhian, Mio Yûki, Rirî Furankî, Kanata Hongou
- © Because Takashi Miike's oeuvre is so wildly varied, individual projects are hard to predict. Are we getting Audition, 13 Assassins, Fudoh or Zebraman? In the case of Yakuza Apocalypse, it's all four. And then some.

It follows a low-level Yakuza, Kageyama, who's promoted when his dying boss turns him into a vampire. The boss was kindly, insisting on targeting fellow gangsters and protecting civilians where possible. But when Kageyama starts breaking the rules, all hell breaks loose...

The first 20 minutes feel like Miike's playing it relatively straight, with vampiric elements present but minimalised. Then a new character's introduced, and all bets are off.

Featuring a lead antagonist who looks like Kermit crossed with Big Bird, a henchman Kappa goblin with a green beak and bad BO, and *The Raid*'s Yayan Ruhian as a geeky tourist with kung fu skills, it veers between po-faced seriousness and wide-eyed mania.

You'll either adore or abhor the tonal inconsistencies, but if The Legend Of The Seven Golden Vampires is in your DVD collection, this might be your ultimate Miike movie.

- DExtras Trailer. Sam Ashurst
- Miike introduced *Apocalypse* at Cannes in 2015. Dressed in geisha drag, he promised to retire from violent films.



HEROES REBORN

A troubled rebirth



Creator Tim Kring

Cast Jack Coleman, Zachary Levi, Robbie Kay, Kiki Sukezane

When Heroes Reborn first

aired, the show's makers also produced a six-part found-footage web series called *Dark Matters*. It's included on this release – and it's the best thing about it.

At least it does something different with the franchise. Heroes Reborn, however, is the same old same old. There are new characters, sure, and a new storyline about humans and super-powered "Evos" trying to live together in harmony. Other than that, this miniseries resolutely fails to acknowledge that multiple shows and films - Alphas, Sense8, The Avengers, the second X-Men trilogy - have all moved the genre on since Heroes first launched. Its first series was revolutionary; Heroes Reborn looks like something we've seen many, many times before.

Based on an epically bloated and consequently resoundingly hollow premise about a BIG EVIL

CORPORATION manipulating Evos for its own ends, Heroes Reborn fails to bring back the original characters you'd most like to see (Sylar, Claire, Peter) and gives roles that are barely more than lip-service cameos to many others (Hiro, Parkman, Mohinder), while trying to force you to care about a next generation of Evos who suffer from having no exciting new powers to mark them out. Or decently written characters. Only Noah Bennet returns for a major role, and he appears to be ill-at-ease throughout.

There are some impressive visuals, a few good action setpieces and occasional wry moments of self-referencing humour, but overall this is a bland, half-hearted, not-very-heroic failure that makes the end of the world feel immensely ponderous.

• Extras The aforementioned web series Dark Matters (41 minutes), which is good fun; "Reliving The Legacy" (10 minutes) – mostly

Part of the series takes place 7,957 years into the future. Showrunner Tim Kring was born on 7/9/57 (in US-style date order).

clips plus cast and crew telling you

how great the show is; 15 deleted

scenes (16 minutes). Dave Golder



THE FORGOTTEN

About A Boy

RELEASED 2 MAY
2014 | 15 | DVD

- Director Oliver Frampton
 Cast Clem Tibber, Shaun Dingwall,
 Elarica Johnson, James Doherty
- This glum British ghost story concerns a teenage boy bereft of his mother who goes to live with his dodgy geezer dad on a thinly-populated London council estate.

London council estates can be pretty scary, and this one certainly is: young Tommy (Clem Tibber) starts hearing strange noises and screams from the property next door. His father (Shaun Dingwall, Rose Tyler's dad in *Doctor Who*) isn't sure what's afoot, and when persons unknown start entering their flat, things worsen further, so Tommy enlists new pal Carmen (Elarica Johnson) to get to the bottom of the incidents

Themed around the difficulties of family, in particular absent or neglectful parents, debut director Oliver Frampton's film could barely be more downbeat. You won't see a more drab, dour, crepuscular movie all year. The unhappy characters sport pinched faces as they traipse round grey, desperate landscapes, moving from shuttered rooms to bleak cafes to dingy communal areas, having no interaction with a world that isn't in cold shadows. The mystery intermittently intrigues, but The Forgotten's heavy cloak of depression falls quickly and never lifts.

- © Extras None. Russell Lewin
- Director Oliver Frampton and writer James Hall were both previously script editors on police show *The Bill*.



THE ALIENS Series One

Troy Story



EXTRAS **

RELEASED 9 MAY

2016 | 15 | DVD

- Creator Fintan Ryan
- Cast Michael Socha, Michaela Coel. Michael Smiley, Jim Howick

The title of this E4 show is so frustrating - and not just because it's drearily unimaginative, but because this six-part comedy-

drama fails to deliver on all that For one thing, the aliens of *The*

Aliens are, well, barely alien. In this alternate timeline, a spaceship full of 'em crash-landed in the Irish Sea in 1977; that being the era of SF sitcom Mork & Mindy, they're nicknamed "Morks". Now they're confined to a ghetto called Troy, their role in human society restricted to menial labour. Michael Socha plays Lewis, a

border guard with more in common with the underclass he polices than he knows - turns out he's half Mork

There's potential for a fascinating clash of cultures here, but it's squandered. The aliens not only look like us (except for a puzzling fondness for garish shellsuits) and sound like us (complete with Welsh and Irish accents) but act like us: unexplained mass amnesia means they have no knowledge of their culture. This means the idiots and low-lifes on one side of the border wall are barely distinguishable from those on the other. Defiance it ain't.

Neither does the series really explore another definition of "alien" - as in "illegal aliens". Immigration is one of the hottest talking points of our times, but if you're expecting thought-

provoking allegory you'd be better off investing in a box set of Alien Nation; The Aliens is more interested in mixing up Lewis in a turf war between Mork drug dealers (the one big difference between the two species is that humans can get high by smoking Mork hair...).

The series has its strengths. Michael Socha is a likeable lead, though this role doesn't exactly stretch him - kind-hearted, naive Lewis is basically a less hairy version of Tom, his Being Human werewolf; still, it gives him plenty of opportunity to do his endearing evebrows-like-Tower-Bridgeopening sad-face. The soundtrack - which blends the likes of Bo Diddley, The Slits and Justice - is also excellent, as is the production design of the run-down Alien Zone.

66 Doesn't fulfil the promise of its premise 🤧

Some of the humour hits the target too - though in falling short of the outrageous excess of Misfits (also made by production company Clerkenwell Films), it often hits tiresome lad-bants instead; far too much time is spent mocking Dominic (Peep Show's Jim Howick), a Mork cleaner with a gay crush on Lewis, and while eventually the series lavishes sympathy on him, initially it feels like it's punching down.

But ultimately The Aliens disappoints because it doesn't fulfil the promise of its premise. Because of that, it's just not on the same level as the likes of In The Flesh, Being Human and Humans. Extras Two short featurettes which interview the cast and discuss "creating a believable world" (14 minutes). Ian Berriman

While in Bulgaria shooting, Michaela Coel (Lilyhot) was pelted with stones in what

"Yeah. but don't

it look pretty?



Monsters man's mate's movie



RELEASED 13 MAY

2016 | 15 | VOD (Sky Store)

- Director Steve Gomez
- Cast Vanessa Kirby, Thure Lindhardt, Mike Noble, David Ajala

The publicity for this

British robo-themed actionthriller links it to Monsters. Gareth Edwards' debut set in an aliens-infested South America. Why? Well, the director of Kill Command is a friend of Edwards: meet Steve Gomez, who has a similar background in effects and also tries to make modestlyproduced CG visuals go far.

In Kill Command, these visuals go a long way, with some creditably integrated CG planes and robots. Set largely in woodland, the film is attractively lit and lensed; this is far from the low-rent cinematography you expect in budget productions.

Sadly, Kill Command also has a dull-as-ditchwater script and characters. In the near future, a squad of soldiers is dropped on an island for a training exercise, but find the giant spidery robots hunting them are playing to kill. The soldiers suspect their companion, Mills (Vanessa Kirby); because she has a cyber-enhanced brain, the bots see her as kin. But despite this interesting plot wrinkle, the film is mostly tedious, with no humour and little in the way of gore. The final battle is well executed, and will no doubt look great on its creators' showreels, but it comes too late to save the film. Andrew Osmond

Steve Gomez and Gareth Edwards met when both were studying film at Surrey Institute Of Art & Design.

Reviews



KRAMPUS

Slay ride

EXTRAS *** RELEASED OUT NOW!

2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

- Director Michael Dougherty
- Cast Adam Scott, Toni Collette, Emjay Anthony, David Koechner
- After tackling Halloween with portmanteau pic Trick 'R Treat, director Michael Dougherty sets his sights on the festive season. Drawing on folklore, he tells the story of a dysfunctional family who receive a visit from Father Christmas's dark shadow - a creature that punishes the wicked and disbelieving.

Krampus shows up when young Max (Emjay Anthony), dismayed by his relatives' behaviour, decides he no longer believes in Santa. Cue a mysterious blizzard and Christmas-themed beasties who, with their master, take people out one by one.

Dougherty's clearly having a lot of fun, and pulls off some effective frights with a blend of practical effects and CG trickery. A smart move was casting people who make their funny characters entertaining before the snow picks up and the screaming starts.

The blend of comedy and horror doesn't always work, leaving Krampus feeling a little disjointed - but you've got to respect a director who commits to the darkness inherent in the tale.

- © Extras An entertaining commentary from Dougherty and his co-writers: featurettes on the effects, stunts, creatures, production design, cast and Dougherty's "vision"; deleted/ extended scenes; alternate ending; gag reel. James White
- Austrian traditions include Krampus Runs, where boys aged 14-18 walk the streets dressed as the creature.



BLOODSUCKING

EXTRAS *** RELEASED 16 MAY 2015 | 15 | DVD

This indie horror-comedy has a title as obvious as its satirical target. Turns out the new management at a grim call centre are - literally - soulstealing fiends.

It wants to mix the lo-fi awkwardness of The Office with the blood-stained charm of Shaun Of The Dead, but the scares are perfunctory and the screenplay is all low-wattage smirks and no killer moments.

Extras Commentary; behind-the-scenes piece; bloopers. Nick Setchfield



EXTRAS *** RELEASED OUT NOW! 2014 | 12 | Blu-ray & DVD (dual format)/DVD

This lavish 11-part anime thriller from the director of Cowbov Bebop concerns two

mysterious boys bombing Toyko locations, chased by cops and darker forces. It's superbly made, with cinematic action setpieces, but its story and characters are flimsy. However, the jaw-dropping finale is both nutty and beautiful.

• Extras Two commentaries and separate discussion by the dub cast; the Blu-ray adds a 100-page book. Andrew Osmond



EXTRAS 7 RELEASED 2 MAY

2016 15 DVD

In this low-budget,

near-future noir, a scientist time-travels back a few days by creating a wormhole. Though smart and slick, it's overly familiar on two fronts.

The aesthetic is pure *Blade* Runner, all Vangelis synths and light streaming through Venetian blinds. The circular narrative, meanwhile, recalls the likes of Primer, Timecrimes and Triangle. You'll need to draw a flowchart to chart the hero's path, but as it all boils down to meeting a girl, it barely seems worth the effort.

Extras Trailer, Ian Berriman



EXTRAS ** RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 15 | DVD/download

Next time you're yawning through a bog-standard exorcism scene, count yourself lucky; without them possession films are even more tedious.

This female-centric "true story" follows a teen with a mental disorder taken over by a girl killed in a road accident - a situation both their mums accept with astonishing ease.

Unless you have a phobia of flickering lights, it's not remotely scary - but neither is it an affecting blub-fest. Bewilderingly pointless.

Extras Deleted scenes.

lan Berrimar



HOME ENTERTAINMENT



THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE

The nipples of history



1960 | 15 | DVD

- Director Piero Regnoli
- Cast Walter Brandi, Lyla Rocco. Maria Giovannini, Alfredo Rizzo

Fans of naked-vampirewomen films! Here's the first one! But what was risqué then now looks mild indeed.

The plot is pure horny horror for the boys: a group of glamorous showgirls get lost and have to spend the night at a remote castle where a bloodsucker resides. Once there they wander round in corsets and diaphanous nighties, but it's mostly a tease - a strip is interrupted just as the bra's about to come off, and a girl who says, "I think I'll go and take a shower" never actually does. The dirty mac brigade must have exploded with frustration. But then - movie history! - there's a brief topless shot, although, hilariously, for the rest of the time the girl's body is shrouded in the blackest shadow you've ever seen.

A big hit at the time, this dubbed Italian flick is lighthearted, padded, and mostly painless fare, quite likeable but never especially thrilling. Send it to your dirty uncle.

- CEXTRAS Kim Newman discusses the film in his usual amiable fashion (15 minutes), then introduces a quarter-of-anhour long 8mm version, which is both dull and fascinating. Plus: a short deleted scene, French credits and a trailer. Russell Lewin
- Director Regnoli previously worked as the film critic for the Vatican's daily newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano



CHILDHOOD'S END

Operation Overlord



Director Nick Hurran Cast Mike Vogel, Osy Ikhile, Daisy

Betts, Georgina Haig

You certainly can't fault this Syfy miniseries for ambition. With a running time in excess of four hours, Childhood's End

wholeheartedly embraces the big, hard SF ideas of Arthur C Clarke's original novel, while pulling a story first published in 1953 firmly into the 21st century - for better and worse.

The script (from Life On Mars co-creator Matthew Graham) keeps the fundamental pillars of the tale intact: alien "Overlords" arrive on Earth promising to end poverty, famine, disease, war and anything else traditionally associated with Horsemen. Many of the themes (particularly those concerning how much control we want over our own destiny) still feel relevant, and the first of the three episodes is excellent. There's blockbuster spectacle, dramatic differences of opinion about the alien visitors, and an escalating sense of mystery, culminating in

the reveal of lead Overlord Karellen's strangely familiar face.

After that high the series loses its way. While there are still major revelations to come (the story doesn't pull any punches), parts two and three leave you feeling like the novel's plot has been crowbarred into a modern TV format. Childhood's End exists somewhere between an overlong movie that outstays its welcome and a TV series that's too rushed for you to really get to know the characters. In a story that stretches over decades, the passage of time becomes frustratingly difficult to track, while key players hang around on screen long after their usefulness to the plot has expired.

Still, look past the clunky religious metaphors and all the melodramatic, soft-focus scenes about the power of love, and this is serious science fiction telly of the kind we don't get enough of - it wouldn't have taken much finetuning to turn this into a classic.

• Extras Loads of deleted/ extended scenes. Richard Edwards

Humanity's rep Ricky Stormgren is a farmer here, but in the original novel he was Secretary-General of the UN.



Art, artifice and anime

EXTRAS *** RELEASED OUT NOW! 2015 | 12 | Blu-ray & DVD (dual

format)/DVD Director Keiichi Hara

Cast Anne Watanabe, Yutaka Matsushige Kumiko Asô

• Here in the West, if we

know anything about 18th/19th century Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai it's the iconic "The Great Wave Off Kanagawa", and maybe his woodblock print series "Thirty-Six Views Of Mount Fuji". If you watch this anime vou'll be left little the wiser.

This is no biopic. This is an elegant, fanciful, fantasy-tinged snapshot of a period of Hokusai's life, when his daughter, O-Ei, is attempting to gain a reputation as an artist too. But her work lacks passion. As that changes, she becomes good enough to anonymously fulfil some of her father's commissions. At least, that's what the film imagines; little is actually known about O-Ei.

It looks stunning and there are some beautiful moments of subtlety, mystical interludes, and clever use of the artform to savour. It is, however, almost completely plotless. It's more like visiting an art gallery of moving vignettes. Worth a watch for its artistry, but ultimately a little unsatisfying. **Extras** Nothing on the standard edition, but the dual-format version (rated) boasts a 120-minute Making Of and an interview with director Hara, and comes with art cards and an art book. Dave Golder

The logo used by the surfy clothing company Quiksilver was inspired by "The Great Wave Off Kanagawa"

Evil doesn't sleep. It waits.

'Uncompromising

Robin Hobb

'I dare you to read it'

Sarah Lotz

'A truly terrif ying parable about mankind's depravity

Kirkus Reviews

THOMAS OLDE HEUVELT 'Reminiscent of vintage STEPHEN KING'

John Connolly

'The next genre superstar'

Paul Cornell



Watch the trailer . . .

if you dare: www.blackrockwitch.com



HOME ENTERTAINMEN



THE CALL UP

War Game

** EXTRAS **** RELEASED 23 MAY 2016 | TBC | DVD

Director Charles Barker

Cast Max Deacon, Morfydd Clark, Ali Cook, Tom Benedict-Knight

o If you know your Star Trek:

The Next Generation, then all we need to say is this is a "holodeck goes wrong" story dragged out to monotonous length. If you don't know Next Gen, you'll still probably recognise this as an extremely schematic "VR computer game starts killing its players" story without any interesting twists.

Eight gamers – six men, two women - are invited to test a cutting-edge combat game, donning body armour and VR helmets and shooting their way down the floors of a high-rise building. Naturally they find the digital terrorists they're fighting are jolly realistic. Equally naturally, they learn the game is harsh on losers and that there are no save or quit buttons.

It's the SF equivalent of a pre-Scream slasher film, where the formula is pretty much the whole of the film. The characters have no interesting dynamics, and the functional tower-block setting reminds you of umpteen more vital action films. Gamers will find the tone patronising (players have no friends; combat games bring out our worst impulses). It's a film which cries out for the sardonic bite of Black Mirror - surely Charlie Brooker could have fun with this scenario - or the invention of Wreck-It Ralph.

Extras None. Andrew Osmond

Much of the film was shot on a single floor re-dressed multiple times

WHEN ANIMALS DREAM

A coming-of-rage story

EXTRAS *** RELEASED 16 MAY 2014 | 15 | DVD Director Jonas Alexander Arnby

Cast Sonia Suhl, Lars Mikkelsen, Sonja Richter, Jakob Oftebro

Weirdly, some people are still viscerally disgusted by female body hair. But not the makers of this Danish drama, who see no shame in binning the Ladyshave..

66 This is no standard werewolf film 🤧

Newcomer Sonia Suhl plays Marie, a teenage fish-gutter who's alarmed to discover that she's developing the same mysterious syndrome that affects her mute mother. Symptoms include the growth of thick back hair and a tendency to violent outbursts... Put two and two together yet?

This is no standard werewolf film. The word is never spoken, the Moon appears to have no influence, and even in the final stages of her transformation Marie just looks like she's overdone the hormone tablets. Neither is it interested in gore - the camera generally shies away whenever the throat-ripping commences.

Instead, this is an understated, close-mouthed meditation on



what happens when a young woman chooses to push back against the social pressures bearing down on her, told in a social-realist style, with many moments of contemplative stillness. Bullied by her coworkers (who at one point stage a fishy mock rape), Marie refuses to be ashamed of her difference (or, indeed, of her desires) and

eventually - like a hairy Ms 45 - wreaks a bloody revenge. Though it lacks the more memorable characters of Let The Right One In, it shares a similar ambience, so it may well appeal to fans of that film - and of female empowerment.

© Extras Just a trailer. Ian Berriman

The director "tested" his lead by getting her to scream, naked, covered in fake blood. She ended up hyperventilating.





BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR

Herbert West: not the best



RELEASED OUT NOW!

1989 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD (dual format)

- Director Brian Yuzna
- Cast Jeffrey Combs. Bruce Abbott. Fabiana Udenio, Claude Earl Jones
- This inferior sequel to cult 1985 horror-comedy Re-Animator is the result of the director's idea to "throw a bowl of pasta at the wall and see what sticks". So it's not surprising that it's a bit of a mess.

Mad Dr Herbert West is still trying to raise the dead, and while this means the special effects department has a riot, with some impressively ghastly creations, we're left with an underwritten, slapdash film. Most of the cast ham it up more than a pig on a trampoline; the bland Fabiana Udenio, though. is no substitute for the original's Barbara Crampton.

Extras Over three discs you get the R-rated and unrated versions – almost identical – with three commentaries: one with director Brian Yuzna: one with Yuzna, cast and crew; one with the two leads. There are also featurettes with Yuzna discussing making the film (10 minutes) and the special effects crew giving their side (15 minutes), two helpings of making of footage (40 minutes), deleted scenes (and discussion/ storyboards of scenes never actually shot) and the trailer. The set also includes a booklet and a reprint of comic book sequel Dawn Of The Re-Animator. Russell Lewin

It often took actress Kathleen Kinmont nine hours to get into her bride makeup, and another two to get out.



BEOWULF: RETURN TO THE SHIELDLANDS

Poetry In Motion



Creators James Dormer, Tim Haines, Katie Newman

Cast Kieran Bew Joanne Whalley Ed Speleers, Holly Earl

The biggest mystery about

Beowulf: Return To The Shieldlands is its name. Not just because this 12-part ITV series bears about as much resemblance to the epic poem as it does to Muppet Treasure Island, but because the writers seem to lose interest in Beowulf about 30 minutes into the pilot.

As the series progresses and the politicking of various tribal leaders and their backstabbing relatives comes to the fore, Beowulf increasingly finds himself sent down to the woods for the B-plot of the week - usually hunting some CG beast. He spends the season being bested in fights by old men, women and thieves, and he even outs a bigot! The show has an interesting subtext about

"mythical beast apartheid" - and our supposed hero is squarely in the human supremacist corner.

Flawed heroes can be a good thing, but not in a show like Beowulf. It might have Game Of Thrones pretensions but it's actually closer to the BBC's more trad Merlin. It needs a properly heroic hero for audiences to cheer on, not some morally grey bootboy.

Oddly, take out Beowulf and you have a half-decent show. The lavish production design, the lush cinematography and the OTT costumes all impress. There are some fantastic battles, and the CG creatures have a surprising amount of character. Sure, the dialogue's often cheesy, the plotting's clunky and some of the guest acting is embarrassingly am dram, but by the end Beowulf is nearly, so nearly, beginning to feel like a bona fide epic.

© Extras None. Dave Golder

Beowulf's Dark Ages village was built in an old limestone quarry in County Durham. which used to serve a cement works.

ROUND UP



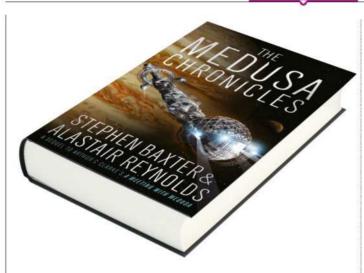
HEARTLESS SEASON ONE (DVD, out now) was previously free to stream via All4's Walter Presents. Set in a boarding school, this moody Danish series is like *Twilight* crossed with a Nordic detective drama. It follows twins cursed with the need to suck people's lifeforce through their mouths or. ahem, naughty bits, Sadly the characters are unlikeable and the story unfolds frustratingly slowly. Under a ne showrunner, DA VINCI'S

DEMONS SEASON THREE (out now, Blu-ray/DVD) is less a Renaissance MacGyver and more a clockworkpunk The Tudors. The Turks have stolen Leo's designs and turned his weapons against the Italians; can Da Vinci out Da Vinci himself? It's a little pompous and plodding in places but looks stunning, and boasts some deliciously dark and kinky moments. In '70s schlocker CRAZE (out now, DVD) an OTT Jack Palance sacrifices victims to an African god because it brings him luck - or does it?! There's promise here, but director Freddie Francis delivers a largely plodding yarn that almost turns into a standard police-procedural. Finally,

BFI's ALAN CLARKE AT THE BBC box set (23 May, Blu-ray) featuring 23 dramas by the Scum director. Two are SFXy: Penda's Fen is getting a separate release (review next issue), which leaves 1984's Stars Of The Roller State Disco. Set in a sort of live-in job centre in an unspecified near-future, it's like *Tucker's Luck* written by George Orwell. Its long takes are hypnotically compelling, the vast set still impresses and the downbeat ending is just plain shattering..

. a quick mention for the

Reviews Get sci-fi news, reviews and features at gamesradar.com/sfx



THE MEDUSA CHRONICLES

Back To The Future



RELEASED 19 MAY

336 pages | Hardback/ebook

Authors Stephen Baxter, Alastair Reynolds

▶ Publisher Gollancz

As a boy, the young Alastair

Reynolds was fascinated by a series of cards given away with Brooke Bond tea, The Race Into Space, which culminated with a card showing a mission to Mars.

The future these cards symbolised never came about, yet it's a future that continues to exert a huge influence on many who grew up in the Apollo and Skylab years. Born in 1966, Reynolds later became an astrophysicist with the European Space Agency. His co-writer on The Medusa Chronicles, Stephen Baxter (born 1957), applied to become an astronaut in 1991.

So it's hardly surprising both have gone on to be SF writers, leaders in a field that by its nature is supposed to be about looking forward. Except this idea of SF as

about trying to see what lies ahead is too often overstated. Leaving aside the truism that SF novels are really about the present, they're also often about the past. No. we're not talking about time travel, but the notion that we grow up with ideas about what lies ahead that are superseded by subsequent events, vet which continue to exert an influence on our imaginations.

Both Baxter and Reynolds grew up steeped in the space race, in an era when many Golden Age authors were still working. For their first collaboration, they engage with this cultural history in a novel that continues the story of Arthur C Clarke's Howard Falcon. An "immortal" cyborg explorer, Falcon made his bow in 1971

66 Clarke, you think, would surely approve 99

novella A Meeting With Medusa, in which he encounters vast floaty lifeforms in the clouds of Jupiter. Falcon's fate, says Clarke, will be to become "an ambassador" mediating between "creatures of carbon" and "creatures of metal".

What might Clarke have meant by this? It's a question Baxter and Reynolds answer by rooting their story in an alternate timeline, in which rocketry and space exploration have forged ahead but the development of AI has lagged behind. Until, that is, a machine achieves consciousness, setting the scene for a solar systemspanning conflict between humankind and an emergent machine civilisation - a conflict seen through the eyes of Falcon.

It's here that one key advantage of setting a novel in the SF of the past becomes clear: if post-Vernor Vinge SF seems unable to escape the idea of a technological singularity as an inevitable prelude to humankind being usurped, Baxter and Reynolds go one step back in order to then go forwards and challenge this notion. We're offered good reasons to suggest humanity might survive such a conflict, not least in the very Clarke-ian idea that sensible naysayers on both sides would work for peace.

This riffing off the source material works beautifully well but, at other times, strange as it may seem, Clarke's influence intrudes. In particular, in a novel where nostalgia-tinged pastiche is an inevitable risk, there's sometimes a Clarke-ish dryness. Some of the characters seem underdeveloped too, a presumably unwitting reminder that Golden Age novelists were better at writing about ideas than actual people.

Happily, such faults fall away when the duo's own storytelling takes flight and, served up with space battles, the destruction of planets, exotic aliens, arrogant baddies and sly jokes, we're offered a vivid and vital take on a space age future that never actually happened. Clarke, you may find yourself thinking, would surely approve. Jonathan Wright

Reynolds first read A Meeting With Medusa aged eight, in boys' mag Speed & Power, ' remember being completely blown away."



CHILDREN OF EARTH AND SKY

Remaking history

RELEASED 12 MAY

592 pages | Hardback/ebook Author Guy Gavriel Kay

Publisher Hodder and Stoughton

Set in a pseudo-Renaissance Europe, Children Of Earth And Sky is a look at a world of war,

commerce and intrigue. Several locations stand in for historical cities, such as Seressa, aka the Venetian Republic, and Dubrava, aka Dubrovnik.

The story follows the fates of a voung artist, a disgraced noble lady, a fierce warrior woman, a young soldier and a charming merchant. There's also an ambassador, a chancellor, the old Empress-mother and more. Some might even say there are too many points of view. Indeed, the story changes between them so swiftly that you struggle to become fully attached to the world or its many characters.

Rather frustratingly the text also changes tense throughout, with all but one of the characters written in the past tense, but changing to present tense for Marin, the merchant. It's a confusing narrative device that continues to distract and iar throughout the book. If Kay was trying to make a point, it isn't made clearly enough.

There's a fantastic plot in Children Of Earth And Sky - it's a truly sweeping epic - and some brilliant characters. But all of this is mired in clumsy narrative devices and a lack of focus. Bridie Roman

 Back in 1974/1975, when he was a student, Kay worked with Christopher Tolkien, helping to edit *The Silmarillion*

Reviews



DOCTOR WHO: IN THE BLOOD

Don't feed the trolls



RELEASED 12 MAY

335 pages | Hardback

Author Jenny T Colgan

Publisher BBC Books

The casting of Catherine Tate

was one of the most controversial decisions of Russell T Davies's time as *Doctor Who* showrunner – could the comedian known for her brash characters really work in the TARDIS? Fortunately the answer was yes, and Donna became the standout companion of new *Who*: determined, independent and always caring. It was the show's loss when she left after just a year, so a return to the TARDIS duo's time together is very welcome.

In The Blood sees the Doctor and Donna back on modern-day Earth and fighting a very 21st-century villain: internet trolls. Or rather, alien parasites – Rempaths – which feed on the resentment and frustration of online commenters, building up their anger until killing them.

The stand-out feature of this book is the way Jenny Colgan captures all the characters – the Doctor, Donna, her grandad Wilf, her mum Sylvia; all of them are pitch-perfect, and you can hear every line in the actors' voices. Occasional pop culture references from the Doctor grate slightly, but are again utterly in tune with his on-screen persona.

Unfortunately the rest of the novel is weaker. Website commenters, online trolls and internet misogynists may seem like the stuff of a story for our age, but from the overweight slob living with his mother and yelling at actresses online, to Donna's friend, who outsources her domestic life to cleaners and nannies while barely lifting her eyes from her smartphone, the book takes the line of right-on cliché rather than genuine examination. And as the Doctor and Donna rush around the world chasing internet connections the various factions and interests never feel well explained, leaving the conclusion somewhat confused and unsatisfying.

Rhian Drinkwater

Donna's also about to return in a new series of Big Finish audios starring Tate and Tennant - review next issue.

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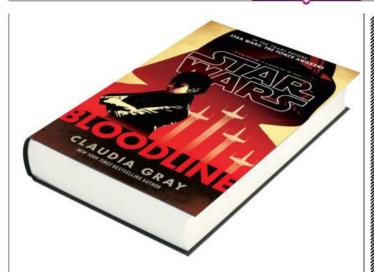


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STAR WARS: BLOODLINE

The Leia Tapestry



RELEASED 5 MAY

352 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author Claudia Gray

Publisher Century

There's an added level of

excitement to Star Wars novels these days - now they're part of Lucasfilm's new all-encompassing continuity, every plot point is ripe for dissection and analysis. In fact, the events of Bloodline - set six years before The Force Awakens - are so integral to the new mythology that it should probably be considered essential reading for any fan.

While Chuck Wendig's Aftermath arrived to greater fanfare last autumn, this is the more compelling novel - and not just because Gray's prose flows more elegantly than Wendig's. For starters, it has the advantage of focusing on Leia Organa, rather than a bunch of unknown characters on a planet you've never heard of. It's also a cracking political thriller that reveals plenty about how a foundering New Republic spawned both the First Order and the Resistance.

The reinvented Expanded Universe has already established itself as an exciting place to explore, and Gray embraces this brave new galaxy to tell a story of government corruption, criminal gangs vying to fill a Jabba-shaped void and a political system buckling under bureaucracy. Bloodline is undeniably talky - though Leia does get some fun action scenes - but that hardly matters when the corridors of power are so ripe with intrigue. Scoundrels come in all shapes and forms in Star Wars, and - aside from some familiar faces - you never quite know who to trust.

Beyond the politics there's a sad, very human tale of a woman who's sacrificed her entire life for the greater good, yet sees everything falling apart around her. Ultimately you're left wishing she could fly off in the Falcon for a few years of fun with Han and the future Kylo Ren (at this point still Ben and in training with Luke). Best not tell her about The Force Awakens, eh? Richard Edwards

Leia's intern Korr Sella appears in *The*Force Awakens – she's on Hosnian Prime when it's destroyed by the First Order.



OUTRIDERS

Not-so-special ops



RELEASED 5 MAY

432 pages | Paperback/ebook

Author Jay Posey

Publisher Angry Robot

Military SF never seems to

go out of style - there's a continuing demand for pulp-infused tales of adventure in the darkest reaches of space. The latest addition is Outriders, the first in a series that's aiming to deliver lean and unpretentious sci-fi thrills.

Set in a traditional spacefaring future where both the Moon and Mars have been colonised, the story follows Captain Lincoln Suh as he's enlisted into a secretive group called the Outriders. Designed to gather intelligence outside the normal rules, Suh and his team are soon embroiled in a series of dangerous intrigues that could pitch Earth and Mars into full-scale war.

Author Jay Posey delivers plenty of action-packed setpieces, and his biggest success with this novel is the realism he brings to the combat and military details; these aspects feel properly authentic. Taken purely as a page-turning romp, Outriders is often fun - it's just a pity that the SF world-building lacks originality, while the plot suffers from some very predictable twists. Mainstream action fans will find some entertainment here, but Outriders lacks the inventiveness that would make it stand out from other pulp SF adventures. Saxon Bullock

Posey's day job is Narrative Designer for Ubisoft, working on Tom Clancyrelated franchises like Rainbow Six

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



THE EMPIRE **STRIKES BACK:**

RELEASED OUT NOW!

548 pages | Hardback Author Gary Gerani Publisher Abrams

 Complete title: Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back - The Original Topps

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 Original Topps editor Gary Gerani provides an intro and commentary.

Includes rare comic strip-style illustrations of the film's main players, commissioned by Lucasfilm in 1980.

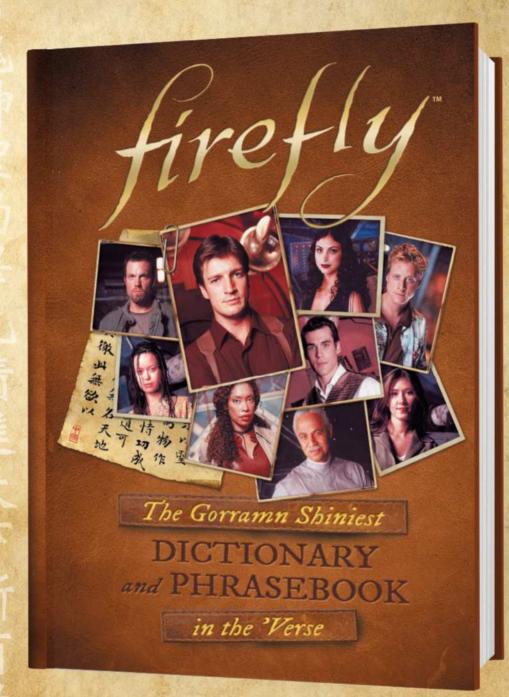
Winning card caption: "Alas, poor Threepio" as Chewie holds the droid's disembodied head. Not bard at all.

 Also recently released: a collection of '90s range Star Wars Galaxy. A Return Of The Jedi book is





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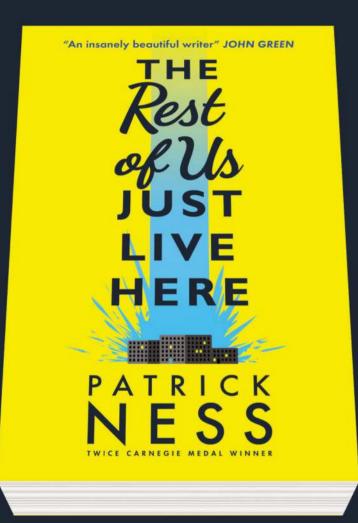


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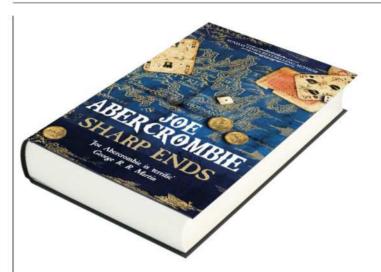


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SHARP ENDS

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels



Publisher Gollancz

RELEASED OUT NOW!

290 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author Joe Abercrombie

This is not the best place to

begin if you're a newcomer to Joe Abercrombie. Sure, each of the 13 action-packed shorts in this collection *can* be enjoyed individually. But you'll get the most out of them if you recognise the characters from his six *First Law* books. That's not to say *Sharp Ends* is necessarily terrific value if you're an Abercrombie aficionado either. Over half these tales have been published before.

For those, however, who've taken a good sniff of Cosca, Monza and Ninefingers – perhaps read the bestsellers but not the special editions – it's a perfect bloodstained buffet. It adds detail and depth to many of the novels' supporting cast, and serves up vignettes spiced with Abercrombie's trademark humour. There's a Pratchett-like parody of epic

66 Not the best place to begin 99

fantasy throughout... if Pratchett dropped the C-bomb and relished disembowelment. This world is dark, but rich with bathos and farce, giving us battles that end suddenly with a protagonist, "struggling to mop the gore from between her tits with a rag torn from a dead man's shirt".

You'll witness a lot of fighting. Expect bar brawls, ambushes, stand-offs and skirmishes. The opening and closing tales are energetic fan-pleasers about the First Law's most famous characters: the former shows us Glokta before he became a twisted torturer; the latter concerns Bethod and Logen. At the heart of the collection are five stories featuring mismatched reprobates Shev and Javre, beginning with "Small Kindnesses", the 2013 story where they meet, and concluding with 2014's "Tough Times All Over". But the best story here is "Yesterday, Near A Village Called Barden", which appeared in the exclusive Waterstone's version of The Heroes. That's Abercrombie's best novel, and this short shares its wry view of "heroism", delighting in the banality and randomness of warfare. Dave Bradley

Joe Abercrombie is currently composing a brand new trilogy in the *First Law* universe, set 30 years after the original books.

Reviews



What a stitch-up!



RELEASED 28 APRIL

384 pages | Hardback/ebook

- Author Thomas Olde Heuvelt
- Publisher Hodder & Stoughton
- Devery town has its fair

share of problems: drugs, vandalism, an undying manifestation of ancient evil haunting the streets.

Okay, the last one is probably restricted to Black Spring, the town at the centre of Hex. Back in the 17th century, witch Katherine Van Wyler was punished by having her eyes and mouth stitched shut and being left to die. Her spectral presence now lingers in the town. The locals have grown used to her spectre, and an organisation called HEX has been established to make sure that no one ever undoes those stitches and unleashes Katherine's dark powers once more. Guess what some of the locals are planning...

Equal parts Stephen King and The Cabin In The Woods. Thomas Olde Heuvelt's novel is a pop page-turner with an intriguingly weird ambience. Although he subverts Katherine's menace with humour - the local kids trip her up and place sunglasses on her - it's always clear that they're poking a hornet's nest.

Some of the characterisation is sketchy and the prose suffers from the occasional tone-deaf line, but that may well be down to the translation from the Dutch. And it's forgivable in such a funny, surprising and eerie novel. Will Salmon

Want to try before you buy? You can read the first chapter of Hex online at Tor.com: http://bit.ly/hexchapter1.

REISSUES

The pick of this month's paperbacks? Probably . Adam Roberts' weird Jules Verne homage, **TWENTY**

TRILLION LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA (★★

12 May, Gollancz). In 1958,



the crew of a French submarine set sail to test a revolutionary atomic engine; after something

goes awry, they find themselves travelling through a universe where the cosmic medium is water. We said: "Packed with sly jokes, puns and farcical moments. it successfully negotiates humour, speculative SF and suspense." Meanwhile,

UPROOTED (****



5 May, Pan) sees Naomi Novik leave behind the Napoleonic dragons of her Temeraire books for the first in a new series inspired

by Polish folk tales. It follows an apparently unremarkable 17-year-old girl from a village beside a scary enchanted forest, who's picked to be a magician's latest apprentice. We said: "Cleverly plotted, colourfully imaginative, and sharply interesting in the moral dilemmas it poses its characters." Also worth a look: first-time author Al Robertson's

CRASHING HEAVEN (★★★★ , 12 May, Gollancz). Set in a future

ruled by god-like Als (after humanity lost a human/AI war), this noirish blend of techno

thriller and hard SF sees a guy whose mind is linked with a "puppet" AI dragged into a twistyturny mystery. We said: "Doesn't quite reach the heights of mindbenders like Altered Carbon or The Quantum Thief, but it's still a satisfying adventure for those who like their SF with a darker edge.

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THE WOLF IN THE ATTIC

Refugees and werewolves



RELEASED 5 MAY

320 pages | Paperback

- Author Paul Kearney
- Publisher Solaris
- This is a curiously old-

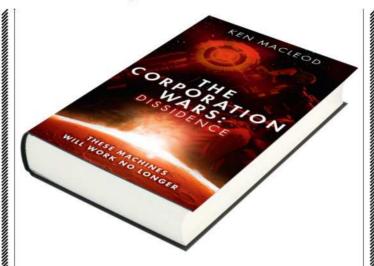
fashioned children's fantasy. and not because of its historical setting. It's the sort of book in which our heroine learns key plot elements by eavesdropping on adults discussing their (nefarious) plans for her, not once but three times; the sort of book in which more "folksy" characters are distinguished from the posh and educated by the fact that they say "bain't" and "ee" a lot.

The Wolf In The Attic concerns 11-year-old Greek refugee Anna, who lives in a ramshackle house in '20s Oxford, with an alcoholic father driven to drink by the pressures of making a new life and his memories of what they've fled. Wandering Port Meadow with only her doll, Pie, for company, Anna meets a group of Roma people, and discovers that there are strange creatures lurking in the shadows of the woods; back in the city, she's outside the Eagle & Child pub at just the right time to bump into JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis and chat about religion.

Unfortunately, these various elements don't sit well together, as if the book can't quite decide which story it wants to tell. Lots of potential, but uneven and under-developed in execution.

Nic Clarke

Paul Kearney served in TA regiment the Royal Irish Rangers; out of 120 men he was one of only two Catholics.



DISSIDENCE

Fight the power



RELEASED 12 MAY

336 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author Ken MacLeod Publisher Orbit Books

Dike a painter looking to add

new colours to his palette, Ken MacLeod's recent novels have seen him fusing SF with other genres. Descent, for example, featured both flying saucers and a bloke-lit narrative that could have been written by Nick Hornby.

With Dissidence, though, the first part of new trilogy The Corporation Wars, he's firmly back in SF territory, with a space opera that imagines humanity's expansion into space. Or, more precisely, a kind of pre-expansion phase where robots and AIs prepare exo-planets for colonisation.

Except something goes awry light years from Earth and some of the exploratory robots become self-aware. To counter this, world government The Direction sends

66 MacLeod's most entertaining novel 99

out combat robots controlled by the consciousnesses of long-dead soldiers. These include Carlos the Terrorist, who perished years previously and is surprised to wake up in a virtual reality where he's trained for what lies ahead.

The novel is rooted in a familiar trope of contemporary SF, the idea of machine consciousness outstripping humanity - what good is it exploring the universe if machines get there first? - yet MacLeod is far too subtle a writer to let this be a problem. The plot is as much driven by human politics as the robots' bid for freedom, meaning the struggles for primacy aren't just between man and machine, but different factions.

Less positively, there's the odd info dump conversation, but there's a caveat here. Dissidence is a novel that's direct yet still brims with ideas, politics and memorable characters, and if the odd bit of exposition keeps things moving with the pace of an airport thriller, let's not grumble. Rather, let's herald MacLeod's most entertaining novel to date. All that time adding new colours to the palette has been well spent.

Jonathan Wright

MacLeod says the Corporation Wars books form "a very tightly linked trilogy intended to be "read as a very long novel"



THE MONSTROUS

Teenage Hel

PRELEASED 5 MAY

302 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author Francesca Simon

Publisher Faher & Faher

Retellings of Norse god

myths are two-a-penny these days, but while Odin, Thor and Loki tend to steal all the headlines, nobody seems to care about the lesser gods lurking on the sidelines. And you can't get more "lurking on the sidelines" than Hel, Queen of, well, Hel, who rules the underworld and all the dead folk within.

Francesca Simon - better known for her Horrid Henry tales - clearly hasn't had her fill of horrid characters, deciding it's about time we heard Hel's side of things. And so while The Monstrous Child may be written for kids, there's lots of grue and nastiness, with corpses staggering around all over the shop and everybody hating everybody else. Hel's existence is rather enthralling: imagine being born a monster (she has rotting legs), meeting your fellow gods in Asgard and falling in love with one of them (Baldr), then being tossed into the underworld for all of eternity, where you have to brood more than anyone has brooded in all of history. Bummer or what?

If your sprog loves a bit of Norse mythology or is a budding goth at heart - because Hel's about as goth as they come they'll lap this up like goatmead from a goblet. Jayne Nelson

Icelandic volcano Hekla was thought to be an entrance to Hel. In 1750 it was climbed and the theory disproved.

Reviews



INTO EVERYWHERE

Second Choice



RELEASED OUT NOW!

432 pages | Paperback/ebook

Author Paul McAuley

Publisher Gollancz

There's a throwaway quality

to much of the hipster-infused slang Paul McAuley uses in the second of his *Choice* series. On a distant planet opened to humanity after an encounter with ghostly aliens the Jackaroo, a woman called Lisa struggles with the aftermath of a "bad trip" after being infected by alien code. She's soon visited by the "geek police".

But don't let that fool you into thinking this is a frothy book. Rather, it's a novel where the surface lightness, which finds expression in McAuley riffing variously off the mythology surrounding bike gangs, merchant family politics and the demise of Gram Parsons, never obscures the unsettling quality of so much that's going on.

66 A book infused with energy and confidence 95

Viewed as a standalone, Into *Everywhere* is not complex structurally. Building on the future-history McAuley established in last year's Something Coming Through, it offers just two main viewpoints. There's the tale of Lisa, a kind of programmerarchaeologist. Then there's Tony, a rich boy trying to prove he deserves to be taken seriously. As both protagonists find themselves on the run, we gradually learn how their stories relate to each other in a novel that often comes across as a kind of cyberpunk thriller.

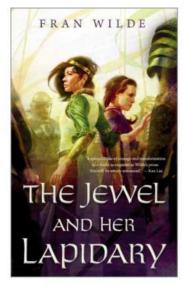
Again, though, the surface lightness is deceptive, because many of the book's themes – in particular, its exploration of what a cataclysmic break with the past might mean for those concerned – are deeply serious.

Paul McAuley recently turned 61. We mention this only because Into Everywhere, a book infused with energy and confidence, shows him shaping up to be one of those rare SF novelists – like Christopher Priest and M John Harrison – whose work gets better even as the bastard years go relentlessly past. Recommended.

Jonathan Wright

McAuley has a story in anthology *Drowned Worlds* (out on 14 July). It's "kind of a prehistory" of the novel he's now writing.

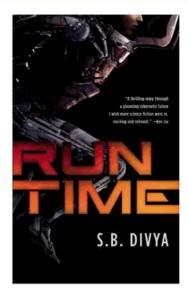
STORIES AT THE RIGHT LENGTH



The Jewel and Her Lapidary

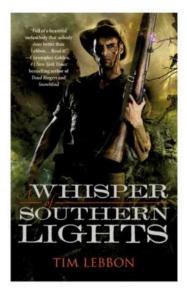
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WONDER WOMAN: EARTH ONE Volume One



RELEASED OUT NOW!

- Publisher DC Comics
- Writer Grant Morrison
- Artist Yanick Paquette

GRAPHIC NOVEL Legendary

warrior, feminist icon - Wonder Woman is one of DC Comics' best-known characters, yet she's lacking the kind of definitive interpretation that both Batman and Superman have received in the past. Now, in the wake of her first live-action movie appearance in Batman V Superman, we've got a new jumping-on point for the character as part of DC's Earth One series of graphic novels.

Scripted by comics mastermind Grant Morrison with gorgeous art from Yanick Paquette, this fresh take on the Wonder Woman origin story is set in the same universe as previous Earth One titles, away from DC's main continuity. This gives Morrison and Paquette the chance to take risks, and the results are bold and imaginative, if not always entirely successful.

The basic set-up is familiar, as warrior princess Diana finds her life on an island of immortal Amazons disrupted by the arrival of Air Force pilot Steve Trevor, resulting in a journey to the USA and a potentially dangerous culture clash.



What's different is that Morrison has gone back to the source, channelling the original stories of Wonder Woman creator William Moulton Marston in the same way he tapped into '60s Silver Age comics for the classic All-Star Superman.

This means an unusual approach to the central character. emphasising Diana's compassion and sense of duty over her abilities as a kick-ass warrior (barely a punch is thrown). Morrison makes Paradise Island into a complex, ritual-based culture, while happily including the nuttier aspects of early Wonder Woman stories, from healing purple rays to kangaroo jousting.

He also controversially plays up the layer of kinkiness that's hard-wired into Wonder Woman's mythos, thanks to concepts like the Lasso of Truth. Marston's original stories featured surprising levels of kink (often involving the heroine in chains); a number of eye-opening homages here mean this ranks as one of the most distinctive takes on the character.

Unfortunately, this strategy doesn't always fit with Yanick Paquette's lush artwork. The book is a visual feast and Paquette draws startlingly beautiful women, but the art is so heavy on cheesecake-style sexiness and the male gaze that it creates a major dissonance with the story's intended feminist approach. It's frustrating: the book is otherwise as well-crafted and inventive as you'd expect from Morrison, yet it's hard not to end up feeling that the definitive Wonder Woman story is still waiting to be written.

Saxon Bullock

Marston also worked in Hollywood - he tested audience reactions to Dr Jekvll And Mr Hyde by monitoring blood pressure.



STAR WARS: OBI-WAN & ANAKIN

Impressive, most impressive

RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher Marvel Comics

Writer Charles Soule

Artist Marco Checchetto

ISSUES 1-3 With numerous

Episode VII titles currently filling the shelves, you might be tempted to stroll straight past Obi-Wan & Anakin during your search for BB-8 #1. But that would be most unwise. Sure, it's based on a prequel trilogy most people want to obliterate, but hear us out.

Following Ani and Obi on a mission to uncover the mystery behind a distress signal on a distant planet, with flashbacks fleshing out the events leading up to the trip, the set-up is deceptively simple.

Obi-Wan & Anakin might be the most redemptive thing to happen to Skywalker since his son removed his helmet on the floor of an exploding space station. It gives layered motivation for Anakin's descent into Darth, via smart plot twists and subtle characterisation, handing him several sympathetic /jaw-dropping moments.

Marco Checchetto's gorgeous art contains better "acting" than anything in Lucas's prequels, and Obi-Wan is frequently framed as the coolest mentor in the galaxy.

Containing enough adventure and excitement to throw a Jedi off the path to enlightenment, Obi-Wan & Anakin is a must-read, from any point of view. Sam Ashurst

Soule gave Checchetto "a lot of samurai movie reference", which probably explains why everything looks so cool.







CRY HAVOC

The Dogs Of War



- RELEASED OUT NOW!
- Publisher Image Comics
- Writer Simon Spurrier
- Artist Ryan Kelly

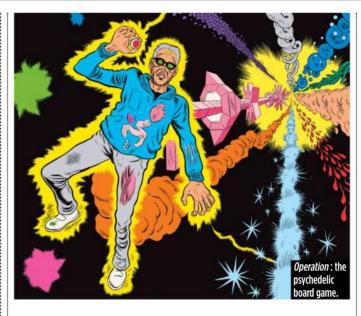
Opening at the end

of the story, cutting back to the beginning, then jumping straight into the middle of the narrative, Cry Havoc's construction might feel disorientating at first. But as our lead Louise Canton's tale unfolds, showing her journey from hipster musician to powerful werewolf, to freelance soldier tracking an enemy monster, it becomes clear the structure is connected to the book's key theme - the way humans use stories and myths to make sense of their lives.

It's heady stuff, but in the midst of all the non-linear experimentation, Cry Havoc never forgets to have fun. This could be the only comic you'll read this year that features a masturbating Icelandic were-hog, and it'll certainly be the last book you'll pick up in 2016 that shares plot threads with bonkers '80s Indonesian horror Mystics In Bali.

With a compelling first arc providing emotional backstory and exciting action, we're prepared to forgive the fact that writer Simon Spurrier occasionally leans heavily on annotations at the end of the book to explain his intentions. He should trust the goodlooking art and likeable leads to carry us past the occasional logic howlers. Sam Ashurst

Okay okay, strictly speaking, Louise isn't bitten by a werewolf, but a Barghest - a spectral black hound.



PATIENCE

The Time-Traveler's Dead Wife



RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher Jonathan Cape

Writer/artist Daniel Clowes

GRAPHIC NOVEL The release of

new work by Ghost World creator Dan Clowes is an extremely rare event, so it's doubly exciting that his latest is a time travel tale.

It follows Jack Barlow, an average shlubb who comes home one day to find his pregnant wife's been murdered. The title references both her name and his obsessive commitment to finding her killer. When, in 2029, Jack stumbles across a means of time travel, he switches his target from avenging Patience's death to preventing it...

Clowes fans will immediately feel at home among all the signature elements of his style:

66 A scabrous love story, at once cynical and tender 99

the sardonic way even lovers talk, the speech bubbles littered with phrases like "tit-germs" and "total penises"; the vibrant, darklyinked art, with its cavalcade of characterful faces and bad haircuts. It's a delight to see Clowes draw the future, so it's almost a shame that the bulk of the story's set in 2006 or 1985.

It's a strangely touching book - a scabrous love story, simultaneously cynical and tender. The damaged, middle-aged Jack is an incompetent temporal investigator whose methods are morally dubious, but the lengths he's willing to go to in the name of love impress. Though the killer's identity is guessable, we're given enough red herrings to keep the mystery involving. It's not a particularly satisfying conclusion - but that doesn't matter too much. For all that this is Jack's story, some of Patience's real strengths are shared with Ghost World: the way it unflinchingly observes the trials of a young woman negotiating the difficult transition to adulthood. Ian Berriman

Clowes spent five years creating *Patience*. Until he finished it, he didn't show a page to anyone - not even his wife or publisher.



X-Rated X-Men

RELEASED OUT NOW!

Publisher Titan Comics

Writer Noel Clarke

Artist J Cassara

ISSUES 1-4 With the scope of

the story solely in the hands of artist J Cassara, comics arguably provide Noel Clarke with a wider canvas than the limited budget of a film like Storage 24 or The Anomaly. Echoing the conspiracy theories of the latter, The Troop is also heavily indebted to X-Men; it centres on a disparate group of teenage superheroes whose personal issues are as significant as their burgeoning abilities.

Adopting a traditional structure, Clarke devotes the first three issues to introducing his cast as they're recruited by mysterious billionaire Edward; this means that their battle with malevolent secret organisation The Illusion doesn't really get started until the fourth issue of this opening five-part run.

Despite the promotion emphasising the graphic nature of some material, Clarke seldom lapses into gratuitousness, instead portraying his adolescent protagonists' behaviour in a naturalistic fashion. Bringing to mind Jim Lee and Humberto Ramos. Cassara proves a perfect foil - a scene where the water-based Torrent manifests out of a toilet is particularly memorable. Chuck in some nods to Doctor Who and even Game Of Thrones, and you've got Clarke's most consistent and rewarding work to date. Stephen Jewell

Noel Clarke has plans for another five-issue run of The Troop, as well as a spin-off series called Girl 1.



QUANTUM BREAK



RELEASED OUT NOW!

- Reviewed on XBox One
- Also on PC
- Publisher Microsoft

VIDEOGAME Time-bending

actioner Quantum Break's structure is pretty simple: between each one to two-hour "act" of gameplay, a 20-minute "episode" of a liveaction TV show plays. In the former sections, you take control of Jack Joyce, a rough-and-tumble charmer racing to stop an apocalyptic event that looks set to end time itself.

He's opposed by Monarch, a shadowy corporation run by his former best friend Paul Serene. It's this side of the conflict explored in the TV series, which tells the story of the workings. motivations and internal conflicts that shape Monarch's actions over the course of the game. It's a novel conceit, but the final result is a frequently brilliant game repeatedly interrupted by an utterly tedious television show.

As Joyce, you use your control over time to transform what would be a basic third-person shooter into pure power fantasy. Freezing foes where they stand, slamming into them at super-speed, stopping bullets in mid-air and more - each of your abilities feels incredible to deploy. Combat isn't necessarily easy, but you always feel like the one in control of the fight.

The game's setpieces are truly spectacular affairs that see you navigating the catastrophes caused by the breakdown of time. From walking through your brother's workshop as it fast-forwards from the past to the present, to platforming across a collapsing bridge as it slips in and out of the time stream, these sequences represent some of the most memorable we've ever seen.

Unfortunately the live-action episodes fail to capture any of the excitement or craft of your time as Joyce. In their attempt to recreate the look of the game, they succeed only in making sets, actors and effects look cheap and strangely artificial. The show is packed with unlikeable characters, groan-inducing dialogue and dodgy editing, but worst of all, it's just boring.

Without the show, the game has a natural rhythm of quiet moments, story beats, and loud action. With it, the breaks between gunfights feel too long, and we found ourselves resenting what would otherwise have been welcome sections of exposition or character development.

Turns out TV really is bad for you. Robin Valentine

The game packs in a bunch of *Alan Wake*Easter eggs, including a chalkboard of theories about the first game's plot





DARK SOULS II

You died. Again

RELEASED OUT NOW!

- Reviewed on PS4
- Also on PC. Xbox One
- Publisher Bandai Namco

VIDEOGAME We're in the dying

throes of the Souls setting. The fires of humanity alluded to throughout the series are sputtering out. Your player character, the Unkindled, must hunt down four Lords of Cinder in a traditional tale of hidden narrative and brutal. unwavering difficulty.

There is a distinct clarity to Dark Souls III's story and world that the previous games have lacked. Each one of Souls' previous plot points is inevitably reaching towards this one end point, or so it seems, and it looks incredible.

But the true key is that tough-as-nails gameplay. You will go through the Dark Souls equivalent of the five stages of grief. Denial: "They can't be serious, this is impossible!" Anger: "What evil psychopath designed this?" Bargaining: "Maybe if I wear fire-resistant armour his strikes will hurt less?" Depression: "I'm never going to beat this guy." Acceptance: "I'll go through the motions one more time..."

Then there's the added, sixth stage. That moment when you knock a boss down to half health and suddenly it all seems eminently possible. It's then, when it clicks, that you come to love Dark Souls III - and recognise it as a true masterwork of videogaming.

Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman

Dark Souls III is planned to be the last in the series, but Bloodborne proves the game's style isn't going anywhere.

Reviews



DOCTOR WHO: NIGHTSHADE

A trip down memory lane



RELEASED OUT NOW!

115 minutes | CD/download

Publisher Big Finish

AUDIO DRAMA Hard as it may be

to believe now, there was a time when Mark Gatiss wasn't a hugely successful writer/performer turning up in everything from Sherlock to Wolf Hall. Back in 1992 he made his first official foray into the world of Doctor Who with spin-off novel Nightshade; now it's the latest book to get a Big Finish audio adaptation.

The story sees the Doctor (Sylvester McCoy) considering retirement as he and Ace (Sophie Aldred) visit the village of Crook Marsham in 1968. Life isn't quiet for long though, as retired actor Edmund Trevithick is seeing alien creatures from his old BBC show *Nightshade* come to life. Soon the village is being plagued by a terrifying force that feeds on memories.

The narrative style owes much to 1989 TV story "The Curse Of Fenric", Gatiss's love of old-school horror is in full effect and there are some lovely references to the Quatermass serials of the '50s. The adaptation captures the book's downbeat tone but struggles with the more visual sequences and some overwrought emotional drama, leaving Nightshade as a flawed showcase of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the McCoy era. Saxon Bullock

The novel mentions a Dr Shearsmith and a Mr Pemberton - named for two of Gatiss's *League Of Gentlemen* co-stars.



STAR WARS: REBELLION

It is a period of civil war...



RELEASED OUT NOW!

Two-four players

Publisher Fantasy Flight Games

BOARDGAME With the massed

forces of the Empire scouring the galaxy, it's surely just a matter of time before the Rebel base is discovered and destroyed... But with each passing cycle, the Rebel cause grows, turning entire systems against the Empire and weakening its already tenuous grip. Who will emerge victorious?

Star Wars: Rebellion is the boardgame die-hard fans have been waiting for. Play progresses by allocating Leaders (heroes of the Star Wars universe) to a series of secret missions. So, for example, the Rebels might send Princess Leia on a diplomatic mission to bolster support, while Grand Moff Tarkin swoops in to interrogate a captured freedom fighter.

Dice rolls determine the outcome, but you can stack the odds in your favour with additional Leaders and Action Cards, while available opposition Leaders can be used to thwart the attempt. The cut and thrust of missions is engaging, although it's a shame it's reliant on the luck of the dice; it'd be preferable if success was purely down to planning and strategy.

Combat is the weakest part of the game, using a slightly convoluted system of colour-coded dice and Tactic Cards to determine the outcome of battles. It's not a deal-breaker, but it feels underdeveloped, and can get fiddly when you have a multitude of pieces vying for space around one planet.

Still, Rebellion is beautifully presented and manages to capture the scale of the saga while staying true to specific events: planets get blown up, Imperial outposts are hit by Rebel strike teams, characters turn to the Dark Side and so on. It takes a while to get going, but provides a tense battle of wits as the clock inexorably ticks down. Steve Jarratt

The game comes with 153 miniatures, including Star Destroyers, TIE Fighters, X- and Y-Wings, and Corellian Corvettes



Moments before death by Soup Dragon.

CLANGERS, BAGPUSS & CO

Oliver's Army

OPENING DATES UNTIL

9 OCTOBER (10.00-17.45)

Admission price Free!

Venue V&A Museum Of Childhood

EXHIBITION There's no more

fitting home for the works of Oliver Postgate than Bethnal Green's Museum Of Childhood, a warehouse filled with toys from past and present and boundless memories to match. Postgate and partner Peter Firmin ran Smallfilms, a studio in a former pig shed that gave us such delights as The Clangers, Noggin The Nog, Bagpuss and Ivor The Engine.

When you walk into the corner of the museum housing this temporary and also tiny (its only downside) exhibition, it's a surprise to discover how small the stars of these shows actually were, given that they seem to take up such huge swathes of our childhoods. Ivor's driver, Jones the Steam, is nothing more than a selection of drawings of heads, arms and legs; the Marvellous Mechanical Mouse Organ is less cathedral, more bird box; the Soup Dragon is more of a Soup Newt.

After you've goggled at the familiar faces you or your kids can learn behind-the-scenes trivia – there are scripts, cameras and even the chance to create your own stopmotion Ivor using an iPad. However, nothing beats the joy of being face-to-whiskers with that saggy old cloth cat, Bagpuss.

Jayne Nelson

A town in *Ivor* is named "Llanmad" - "damn all" backwards, inspired by "Llareggub" in *Under Milk Wood*.

COLLECTABLES



COLLECTABLES

What we've been playing with this month

Kylo Ren's face may be all over the packaging, but these Star Wars mugs (FPI price £4.99/£5.99/£14.99; product codes D5830, D5832, D5831, D5840, B8092) from Half Moon Bay are distinctly old school. Three standard models feature Yoda, Boba Fett and Han Solo designs, while a pair of "mini mugs" come with Yoda and

Stormtrooper faces. The huge Stormtrooper head mug is bugging us, however, because it's so bloody hard to drink out of. Is this what the Ewoks did with those Stormtrooper helmets after they'd stopped using them as drums?



Not much chance of a decent superpowered ruckus with these Batman V Superman Action Figures (FPI price £14.99/£7.99; product codes D6192, D6195, D6193). They're really rigid statuettes, restricting their play potential to standing around looking noble. The Batman V Superman Scenery Pack gives you the two title fight contenders while Wonder Woman and Armoured Batman complete the Warner Bros pantheon. Stand

them in the rain for the full Snyderverse effect.



Ever fancied your own Who-themed personalised reg? Well, don't drive

around with this Bessie Number Plate (FPI price £8.99; product code D3992) gaffer-taped on, or you'll get in bother with the plod. A key piece of evidence for the "actually, I think you'll find his name is Doctor Who" case, it was used on the Third Doctor's vintage car. Warning: do not use it as a wobbleboard, as this is liable to bend it out of shape. Oops.



So Deadpool's the Merc with a Mouth, right? And you have a mouth of your www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk 01621 877 222

Reviews



very own, right? And you like pouring hot liquids into it, don't you? That's the perfect conceptual synergy behind this **Marvel Heroes Pop! Home mug** (FPI price £12.99; product code D5329). We'd love to tell you it breaks the fourth wall by declaring "Handwash only!", but we'd be lying.

After getting encased in that helmet, Darth Vader could no longer consume food normally, and had to chow down on RepMed vita paste, piped in through feeding straws in his mask. So perhaps it's an act of cruel mockery that they've made this **Star Wars Vader Lightsaber Handle Cutlery Set** (FPI price £11.99; product code D5950), with

a knife, fork and spoon for shoving proper food into your gob. They're part stainless steel, but are the lightsaber handles dishwasher safe? It doesn't say, so prepare to scream "Nooooooooooo!" if your utensils go grimy.

Maybe a few more star systems would have dared oppose the Emperor if his ultimate battle station's main weapon was... a flashing green LED. This **Death Star Kitchen Timer** (FPI price £11.99; product code D5974) just about looks the part and counts down to a culinary detonation signified by a tinny approximation of the Death Star's laser blasts. But when the technological terror of your Death

Star is dwarfed by a smartphone's built-in countdown timer capabilities, you have to ask yourself, what's the point?

Prepare to wake up

screaming from nightmares

of these **Doctor Who Talking Plushes** (FPI price £17.99 each; product codes C3685, C6785). Well, not the Tenth Doctor one; his lack of resemblance to David Tennant may confuse, but his cheeky-chappy expression is endearing. It's the Fourth Doctor that's the problem. The real-wool scarf is a nice touch but oh god, *those eyes*; they seem to scream, "Help, I'm a living soul trapped inside a doll – please kill me".

THINGS TO COME

More goodies on their way soon



STORMTROOPER HELMET

Made from lightweight plastic, this Force Awakens titfer will accommodate bonces up to a US hat size eight. If you've really got money to burn, makers ANOVOS also have a pricier fibreglass version.



NINTH DOCTOR FIGURE

BIG Chief Studios are behind this detailed 1:6 scale collector's figure of everyone's favourite trophy-eared Time Lord. It comes with oodles of little accessories, including the psychic paper, a banana and a Slitheen egg!



LIFE-SIZE HARLEY QUINN

Sure, you could buy one of these 5'11" high, foam rubber and latex replicas of Harley, as seen in Batman: Arkham City. We definitely wouldn't assume you're having "special cuddle times" with it every night... You perv.

Photography by Olly Cu





LIMITLESS

The drugs do work... eventually

- **UK Broadcast Sky 1, Wednesdays**
- **US Broadcast CBS, Tuesdays**
- Episodes Reviewed 1.01-1.19

• The history of television is

littered with shows that started off badly, lost viewers and then, paradoxically, went on to become damn fine telly – Marvel's Agents Of SHIELD is a recent example. Sometimes a new series can take anything from five episodes to almost an entire season to find its feet, a struggle which is totally understandable when you factor in just how hard it must be to write, act and produce a show when everybody's still testing out their

chemistry and figuring out what the hell they're supposed to be doing each week.

Limitless is a textbook example of this syndrome. It spends half its first season lurching about like a headless zombie, fiddling with its characters (lead Brian Finch is a dick one week, a saint the next), discovering its tone (comedic farce or serious police procedural?) and, sadly, failing to add anything new to a genre that's already fit to bursting. That genre - albeit this time based on a decent Bradley Cooper movie from 2011 - is basically a spin on Sherlock Holmes, aka "What would happen

if someone with a special talent starts solving mysteries?" Here, we get an ordinary guy taking a drug that heightens his brainpower, leading to him joining the FBI as a consultant. You can see variations on this theme in everything from The Mentalist, House MD, Sherlock, Monk, Medium, The Dead Zone... well, you get our point.

However, things do start to improve as Limitless plods onwards. Once the writers - who are clearly geeks of the highest order - start to loosen up and have fun, so the show spreads its wings. The first clue that Limitless could become something genuinely

Boyle something to do at last.

DID YOU SPOT?

One episode features a serial killer planting an idea in someone's brain using surgery, à la Inception. The murderer turns out to be called Nolan Bale. Geddit?

IT'S WOSSERNAME!

Blair Brown, who plays Brian's mum, and Georgina Haig, as a fellow drug-taker, both played regular characters in Fringe.

BEST MOMENT ▼

→ The cartoon interludes in "Sands, Agents Of Morra" (1.16) are great fun, as are the new illustrated additions to the opening credits!











quirky begins around episode seven, which homages Ferris Bueller's Day Off from start to finish, even down to the costumes. Dream sequences and animations start to become enjoyable rather than irritating. There are in-jokes and movie quotes galore: in one episode Brian helps George RR Martin with the ending of Game Of Thrones; in another someone says: "Let's nuke it from orbit, it's the only way to be sure." By the time some crucial background characters finally get fleshed out in episode 11, Limitless has started to hook you. It's just a shame that it took so damn long - what came before was, while undoubtedly enthusiastic, as generic as generic can be.

Even when the show has perked up, though, there are still problems. Brian's drug-propelled leaps of logic aren't always as clever as they seem to be - for example, he tracks down one of the FBI's 10 Most Wanted by, er, talking to the guy's girlfriend. Duh. Leading man Jake McDorman has a puppy-like charm, but

66 Things start to improve as *Limitless* plods on 99

he's so ordinary, even when he's supposed to be on the drug; just your standard white, 30-something American male TV actor.

At least it's a great touch to see Cooper, also an exec-producer, reprise his role from the original movie in the show's arc-plot (although his scenes with Brian do feel as though Cooper's cast a younger version of himself), and Limitless's cinematography is gorgeous, changing colour according to whether Brian's taken his pills or not. You might have given up before this show cranked it up a notch, and that's fair enough - but if you haven't yet, do stick with it. It might just reward you. Jayne Nelson





CAT GRANT

Calista Flockhart's media mogul in **Supergirl**

UK Broadcast Sky 1, Fridays US Broadcast CBS, Mondays

When your show's lead character is a woman who can fly - to say nothing of setting things on fire with her eyes - it takes a certain something to still manage to be the most powerful woman on screen. Thankfully, Calista Flockhart brings that certain something to long-term Super-sidekick Cat Grant - in spades.

As the CEO of CatCo (and Kara's boss), this Cat is a more powerful version of the character than we've seen before. She isn't someone who's well liked. She's a ruthless businesswoman, an often uncaring boss and frequently a bitch. Yet she's a woman living in a man's world who refuses to compromise or accept second best from anyone around her.

It helps, of course, that in addition to her powerful CEO side - and her devoted mother side, which shouldn't be ignored - she also has a great line in cutting

put-downs. Bitchy she may be, but you can't help but like her when she walks on screen, and though you'd hate having her as a boss, you'd probably be a better person for it by the end.

Cat's very much a practical feminist, concentrating less on winning gender battles and more on ensuring she gets things done. She often seems cold, but as she explains to Kara, she knows that showing emotion in business will weaken her in a way it wouldn't a man, and so she doesn't. And "Every woman worth her salt knows that we have to work twice as hard as a man to be thought of as half as good." It's refreshing to hear these sentiments on primetime TV.

Some love her version of feminism, some hate it, but what's undeniable is that she's a powerful woman in a senior position, refusing to apologise, and feminism and TV - definitely needs more of those. Rhian Drinkwater



SLEEPY HOLLOW

The box of non-delights

UK Broadcast Universal Channel,

Thursdays

US Broadcast Fox, finished

Episodes Reviewed 3.01-3.18

Sometimes a show is only as

good as its Big Bad. For its first two seasons, *Sleepy Hollow* had one of the most famous Big Bads of them all: the Headless Horseman from Washington Irving's classic tale *The Legend Of Sleepy Hollow*. Around this nasty chap and his hooved companion the writers wove a dastardly plot to bring a demon named Moloch into our world, and in doing so they had a lot of fun.

Unfortunately, with Moloch defeated, the Horseman unsaddled and all their lackeys gone – including Ichabod Crane's wife and son – *Sleepy Hollow*'s choice of villain for its third year has been an absolute *disaster*. In theory you'd think Pandora (you know, the woman with the box) would bring a goldmine of unnerving material; she's in charge of all our sins, after all. But instead we simply get actress Shannyn Sossamon talking to herself in a breathy whisper for episode after episode after episode.

Criminally, this year has also managed to flunk its flashbacks. The addition of original US flag-maker Betsy Ross as Ichabod's 18th-century partner-in-crime was probably supposed to add some chemistry, but the pair fizz together about as much as an Alka-Seltzer in the desert. After a while your heart sinks whenever you realise Ichabod's about to reminisce about the past – which

means the "present" plots have to be damn fine to make up for it.

Thankfully, as is always the case with *Sleepy Hollow*, things perk up whenever Ichabod and Abbie do their double-act. He's still hilariously stiff and British; she's still a force of nature. Abbie's sister Jenny and new beau Joe are also fun to watch.

But for all the one-liners, inventive monsters and undeniable charisma of the main cast, nothing can really compensate for the black hole of dull that is Pandora. Even when she conjures another baddie, the Hidden One, who then starts wreaking havoc, she still manages to suck the life out of every plot. After a while *Sleepy Hollow* starts to live up to its name – you just might start snoring. Jayne Nelson

MORE TRIVIA

→ Given how Shannyn Sossamon's Pandora replaced the Headless Horseman, it's somewhat ironic that the actress's latest film is Man Without A Head.

BEST EPISODE

→ "Incident At Stone Manor" (3.10) isn't too bad, as Abbie - trapped in another realm has to fight to get home.

IT'S WOSSISNAME!

→ The Hidden One -Pandora's master - is played by Peter Mensah... also known as "that guy kicked down a well by King Leonidas" in 300.

DID YOU SPOT? ▼

→ Despite not being related, Zach Appelman (who plays Joe Corbin) is the spitting image of Clancy Brown – handy, as he's playing the son of Brown's Sheriff.











The month's most quotable dialogue

MATT MURDOCK "It's not underwear, Foggy. Underwear is comfortable. Daredevil. Episode 2.01



EDWIN JARVIS

One doesn't spend vears in the company of Howard Stark without picking up a thing or two about electrical engineering

"Luckily you didn't pick up the clap.

PEGGY

Agent Carter, Episode 2.07



You know how to bite a dick. Eugene. I meán that with the utmost respect.



DR MARTIN

"Have you eyer considered that all of this excessive partying is your attempt to fill a void?

Attempt? I filled five voids last night!

Episode 1.09



A TV season distilled

SEASON 1

SHADOWHUNTERS

Meet Clary The Demon Slayer

UK Broadcast Netflix, finished

LIS Broadcast Freeform, finished

▶ Episodes Reviewed 1.01-1.10

A blonde redhead walks through the nighttime streets of Sunnydale New York when she is attacked by a vampire demon. But she unexpectedly fights back and defeats the creature, for she is CLARY THE DEMON SLAYER.

Enter geeky guy.

Bu... Sorry, Clary, are you alright?

CLARY

I can handle myself. Xan... Simon. Ever since I've become the Chosen, erm, Shadowhunter, killing demons is just peachy. How are you handling being a vampire?

SIMON

Cool. Do fancy me now?

CLARY

Eeeewwww, no, nerd boy. I'm no fangbanger.

SIMON

Psssst - that's True

Blood. We can't rip that one off too ...

CLARY

[Looking at the body of the demon] What do you think it was after?

SIMON

The Mortal Cup, of course. Everyone in this show is after the Mortal Cup. The vampires, the werewolves, the warlocks, the Women's Institute, Indiana Jones...

CLARY It is, after all, the ONE ORIGINAL IDEA.

SIMON

Well, I wouldn't go that far...

Later at the SHADOWHUNTER HQ, lots of teens in leathers cross their arms and frown.

JACE I think Clary is the key to everything.

ALEC I think she's an irritating cliché.

No, but let me give you loads more exposition about how he's an evil rogue Shadowhunter while giving you a few

footnotes about Seelies1 along the way, because world-

IZZY

Will you quit

squabbling?!

ALEC

It's not fair! I want a

bromance, but Jace

just thinks I stare at

him adoringly

because he thinks

everybody stares at

him adoringly.

Everybody crosses

CLARY

Anyone located my

evil dad yet?

JACE

Enter CLARY.

their arms.

building in this show is 90% info-dumping.

Demons burst in...

JACE How did they get past our defences?

CLARY I must have left the front door open.

> A L.E.C. Girls.

MAGNUS does big fish, little fish, then purple light erupts from his fingers and destroys the demons.

> MAGNUS Done and dusted.

CLARY Hey, dusted! Isn't that from ...?

> LAWYERS **CUT!** Dave Golder



SEELIES ARE FAIRIES, BASICALLY





THE WALKING DEAD

Bat man begins

- **UK Broadcast Fox, finished**
- US Broadcast AMC, finished
- Episodes Reviewed 6.09-6.16

One name has dominated the

second half of *The Walking Dead*'s sixth season: Negan. The leader of the self-styled "Saviors" doesn't appear until the last 11 minutes of the finale, yet his reputation ensures his influence permeates all eight episodes.

Comic fans have long known that Negan is bad news – and that, chances are, a major character was going to meet an unpleasant demise at the end of his barbedwire-covered baseball bat. Lucille.

The show's writers use that shared knowledge to play with viewers from the start. From an early roadside skirmish with Negan stooge Bud, through dealings with the Hilltop and subsequent assault on a Savior compound, everything is steered in one direction – getting most major characters lined up, on their knees, waiting to find out who will have a close encounter with Lucille. It's contrived to the point of ridiculousness, yet undeniably compelling – watching Negan's net close around Rick and co in the finale is almost unbearably tense.

Not quite as tense, of course, as Negan cruelly eeny-meeny-minymoeing his way through the group, deciding who to execute. In just a few minutes on screen, Jeffrey Dean Morgan makes Negan one of the most memorable characters in the show's history, his chilling mix of sadism and charisma making the Governor look like a pussycat. But perhaps the most scary thing about the scene is that he's not that much further over the edge than Rick, the guy the show repeatedly asks us to root for. Rick's hubris is actually the main reason the group are in this mess – let's not forget that he's the instigator of a raid that involved stabbing sleeping Saviors in the head. He's hardly a victim here.

We'll have to wait six long months to find out who Negan's killed, a stunt that feels more a ratings-grabbing cliffhanger than the right storytelling choice. By saving the big reveal until the season seven premiere, the shock value that made Jessie's death so effective earlier in the season has been completely blunted. Better to mourn a much-loved character now than spend half a year in limbo... Richard Edwards

NEED TO KNOW

→ The season finale's tense showdown with Negan is inspired by the comic's 100th issue. There it's Glenn who ends up beaten to death.

NEED TO KNOW 2

→ The armoured guys who come to Carol and Morgan's aid are from The Kingdom. In the comics they don't like Negan either.

TRIVIA

→ Season finale director Greg Nicotero says not even the cast knew who was on the end of Negan's bat.

DID YOU SPOT? ▼

Lucille's debut is foreshadowed several times through the season. Bud and Jesus both use the phrase "right off the bat" when talking about Negan, while Carl finds a gun with a carving of Lucille in "East" (6.15).



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I am a zombie.

is 8 years old.

She travels with me.

This is our story.



Visit bit.ly/zombiediary



SPURIOUS A WARDS Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



Riddler's bomb artwork in *Gotham* is credited to Lauren Rockman, who probably did create it for real as she's the show's art director.



Prof Stein might want to be a space pirate in *Legends Of Tomorrow*, but he looks more like he's doing 'Allo 'Allo cosplay.



TAKEAWAY OF THE MONTH •
Demon opens kebab shop in *The Shannara*Chronicles – health inspectors make enquiries.



Valentine thinks he has the Mortal Cup in Shadowhunters, but daughter Clary has made a mug of him − boom, boom.



"Just look at the muck in here!" Geomancer reckons STAR Labs needs new cleaners in *The Flash*.



Snapped undercover while training in a gulag, Russian sprinters begin to show the side effects of using illegal drugs in *Supergirl*.



Harry can't quite work out where that final piece of the puzzle goes in Stan Lee's Lucky Man. He's so nearly there!



CROSSOVER OF THE MONTH •

Auton spotted in *The Walking Dead*.



Gremlins 2's female gremlin is a suspect in Houdini & Doyle.



CAREER LOW OF THE MONTH OF THE



SCI-FI ROCK'N'ROLL

Pop quiz, hotshots! Literally a pop quiz

② Quizmaster: Nick Setchfield, Features Editor

OUESTION 1

James T Kirk loves the Beastie Boys - but which of their songs references Spock and the Vulcan nerve pinch?

DUFSTION 2

Which '70s rock star played Parson Nathaniel on Jeff Wayne's Musical Version Of The War Of The Worlds? a) David Essex b) Steve Harley c) Phil Lynott

QUESTION 3

1969 hit "In The Year 2525" foretold a doomy future for mankind, filled with pills, machines and genetic engineering. Who were the pop prophets behind the song?

QUESTION 4 PICTURE QUESTION

Which Blondie song told of a man from Mars with a taste for eating cars - and human beings?

OUESTION 5

The Carpenters' "Calling Occupants Of Interplanetary Craft" was originally by Klaatu. From which classic '50s SF movie did they take their name?

QUESTION 6

William Shatner was "burning out his fuse up there alone" covering which Elton John song?

DUFSTION 7

Name the Hot Chocolate hit that told of a close encounter of the third kind.

DUFSTION 8

Which Doctor Who star released the single "Who Is The Doctor" on Deep Purple's record label?

How did you do?









OUESTION 9 PICTURE OUESTION

Who was David Bowie's detective alter ego on 1.Outside?

Which rock icon stars in 1992's time-travel tale Freejack?

OUESTION 11

Who gave us 1962 horror novelty song "Monster Mash"?

OUESTION 12

Name the future Grease star who appeared in 1970's groovy SF musical Toomorrow.

Who were the noughties boy band who used a flux capacitor to visit the year 3000?

OUESTION 14

Anthrax and the Human League had songs about Judge Dredd that shared the same title. What was it?

QUESTION 15

Which planet were Swedish hair-rockers Europe heading to in 1986 hit "The Final Countdown"?

QUESTION 16 PICTURE OUESTION

Name the Afrofuturist band who extravagantly declared 'We have returned to claim the pyramids" in 1975's "Mothership Connection"?

Which Brit SF author frequently collaborated with Hawkwind?

OUESTION 18

Name the Glasgow art-punk band that featured Peter Capaldi.

OUESTION 19 PICTURE OUESTION

This terrifying military experiment turned up in the video for which Kate Bush song?

What was the name of Queen's end credits track on Flash Gordon?

the Crypt-Kickers I2 Olivia Newton-John I3 Busted I4 "I Am The Law"
I5 Venus 16 Eurhsdelic I7 Michael
Moercock 18 The Dreamboys
Moercock 18 The Dreamboys Jagger 11 Bobby "Boris" Pickett and Man" 7 "No Doubt About It" 8 Jon Pertwee 9 Nathan Adler 10 Mick 1 "Intergalactic" 2 c) Phil Lynott 3
Zager and Evans 4 "Rapture" 5 The
Day The Earth Stood Still 6 "Rocket
Man, The Earth Stood Still 6 "Rocket



Which cosmic pop being are you?



 $\rightarrow 0-5$ Babylon



→ 6-10





→ 16-19 Daft Punk



→ 20



BLADE RUNNER: THE OPENING SCENE

lade Runner is essentially one great big iconic moment of a movie. It's one of the most imitated sci-fi films ever, a perfect melange of visual styling, hard-boiled cop drama and plausible dystopian future. But as great as "tears in rain" and poring over clues to Rick Deckard's replicant status are, the scene that's always stood out for me is the movie's very first.

Sorry Star Wars, but the initial frames of Ridley Scott's sci-fi classic could well be the greatest establishing scene in the history of cinema. Eighty dialogue-free seconds tell you everything you need to know about the permanently overcast Los Angeles of 2019.

Massive balls of flame shoot into the sky from giant factory chimney stacks. A taxicab "spinner" flies past the camera. Lightning crackles from the clouds. And beneath them lies an expanse of streetlights. It's a stunning view unlike any we'd seen before, a futuristic urban sprawl

littered with oddly shaped skyscrapers and - eventually - the gargantuan shrine to ostentatiousness that is the Tyrell pyramid.

As a piece of world-building it's sublime, and – with the whole cityscape created as a six-metre-wide miniature - a wonderful testament to pre-CG model-making. But it's also a work of art. The fireballs, flying cars and lightning bolts; the arty, seemingly random shots of an eyeball reflecting back LA; the camera zooming in on

a window in the Tyrell building where Blade Runner Holden is about to test a potential replicant... Everything is choreographed to perfection against Vangelis's synth score, music that's simultaneously uplifting and melancholic, futuristic yet nostalgic for the past. If you meet anybody who fails to get an emotional response from such a sublime minute of cinema, you may just have caught yourself a replicant.

Rich is wondering what the three-month-old Roy Batty is up to right now.

Fact Attack!

Word has it that the industrial cityscapes of 2019 LA were inspired by Scott's memories of driving past Port Talbot steelworks at night.

Effects supervisor Douglas Trumbull also created groundbreaking visuals for 2001, Star Trek: The Motion Picture and Close Encounters.

At one point Blade Runner was to be set in San Angeles, a vast urban sprawl created from a merged San Francisco and Los Angeles.

→ Working titles included Dangerous Days and Android. The studio bought the rights to 1974 novel The Bladerunner so they could use the title.



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